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Retaining Urban Middle School Teachers: An Investigation of Influencing Factors

JacQueline Elaine Richardson
University of Southern Mississippi

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The University of Southern Mississippi

RETAINING URBAN MIDDLE SCHOOL TEACHERS:
AN INVESTIGATION OF INFLUENCING FACTORS

by

JacQueline Elaine Richardson

A Dissertation
Submitted to the Graduate School
of The University of Southern Mississippi
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Approved:

Director

Dean of the Graduate School

May 2012

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ABSTRACT

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by JacQueline Elaine Richardson

May 2012

President William Jefferson Clinton is often credited with beginning a new era of improving teacher quality. Since the late 1990's, the federal government has presented a number of reforms that have encouraged states to develop methods to address the *revolving door* of teachers entering and exiting schools yearly. Retaining teachers has been documented as a historical problem, specifically at the urban middle school level where the most at-risk students need and deserve more stability and effectively trained teachers. Students at-risk of failing need a high-quality teacher in order to attain high standards and graduate with the necessary skills to succeed in the workforce or in college classes (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2005). A great team of teachers is needed to make a school successful (Rhee & Levin, 2006). The purpose of this study was to seek the factors that teachers perceive as important when contemplating whether to remain employed in an urban middle school. In addition, the study examined the relationship between gender, ethnicity, experience and educational level of the teacher, to determine if any of those factors significantly impacted the teacher's decision to remain in a teaching position. The subjects within this study were middle school teachers in an urban school district located in a suburban county of Metropolitan Atlanta, Georgia, with an estimated student population of approximately 100,000. The quantitative research instrument used to gather data for this study was a Likert Survey designed to acquire information about

factors significant to teacher retention as perceived by the teacher. The responses of 194 teachers were reviewed. Data analysis showed that certain factors significantly affected the decision of those teachers to remain employed within their current position. The data revealed significant relationships between gender and job conditions, education and job conditions, and ethnicity and environment when teachers are determining to remain in their current position. The significant relationships discovered by the researcher could prompt future studies to improve student achievement while increasing teacher retention in the urban middle school.

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DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this labor of love to my wonderful and loving parents, Michael and Ozell, to whom I owe everything. I honestly realize that if it had not been for their sacrifice and constant support provided to me through the years, I would not have been able to complete this task. For my siblings, Krystal and Michael David, I am grateful. Thanks for always being my cheerleaders, biggest fans and toughest critics. I love you both. To the Jackson and Richardson families, we are a very close knit bunch and I am such a better person simply because I am a part of this family. Dr. Orr, thank you for being a great mentor and friend – from our relationship I’ve gained the courage to walk in the anointing that God placed upon me. To the many friends that I have gained over the years from South Carolina, Georgia and beyond, here is to all for being that listening ear, shoulder to cry on and foot when I needed that swift kick (and you know who you are), a heartfelt thank you for hanging in here with me. To my best friend and confidant Lamont, thank you for finishing this journey beside me. You knew when I needed tough words and sweet words and you did not hesitate to offer them either. I am truly grateful for your unconditional love and support. Finally, to my grandfather, Odell Jackson, and aunts, Jo-Anne Jay and Earlene Richardson, I dedicate this accomplishment to you that even though you are not on Earth to share in the joy with me, I know you are truly proud in heaven.

“Take delight in the Lord, and He will give you your heart’s desires. Commit your way to the Lord; trust in Him, and He will act.” Psalm 37:4-5

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

President William Jefferson Clinton is often credited with beginning a new era of improving teacher quality. In 1996, he was quoted as saying, “Every child needs and deserves dedicated, outstanding teachers, who know subject matter, are effectively trained, and know how to teach to high standards and to make learning come alive for students” (USDOE, 1998, p. v). In 1997, in his State of the Union address to the people of the United States, President Clinton issued a challenge to ensure that a well-prepared teacher was in every classroom in the country (Croasmun, Hampton, & Herrmann, 1997). Two years later in 1999, as President Clinton unveiled his education agenda, he stated that teaching children is patriotic work, and more must be done to recruit the best people and train them to excel as teachers. He continued by presenting to the American people four proposals that were to *move us towards that goal*. He affirmed that the best way to recruit new teachers that would be committed is to show them that their efforts would make a difference, and to do that, every school in America must be a center of excellence, (The White House at Work, 1999). Yet, during the 1999-2000 school year, the highest numbers of teachers leaving the field of education occurred. That year, 539,778 individuals left the classroom (NCTAF, 2003) including approximately 10, 800 retirees (Provasnik & Dorfman, 2005). In 2000, First Lady Hillary Clinton emphasized the importance of recruiting and retaining new highly qualified teachers for our schools by creating a national job bank, increasing license and pension portability and preserving and building upon the Troops to Teachers program (Clinton, 2000). These proposals were hoped to be included in the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education

Act (ESEA), which has often been described as the federal government's largest and most significant investment in our nation's public schools (Clinton, 2000).

Finally with the reinstatement and passage of the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act in 2002, President George W. Bush mandated that all United States public school teachers would be *highly qualified* by the end of the 2005-2006 school year (Whisnant, Elliott & Pynchon, 2005). According to the United States Department of Education, a highly qualified teacher is described as one who has full state certification, holds the minimum of a bachelor's degree and has demonstrated competency in their subject matter. In a 1998 report presented by the United States Department of Education, it was stated that without well-qualified, caring, and committed teachers, neither improved curricula and assessments, nor safe schools – not even the highest standards in the world will ensure that children are prepared for the challenges and opportunities in America's third century.

In spite of the teacher quality focus from the federal government, there still remains a revolving door of teachers annually. During the 1999-2000 school year, almost one million teachers were in job transition into, between, or out of schools, which has now become the major factor behind staffing schools (Ingersoll, 2003). According to Ingersoll "few educational problems have received more attention in recent years than the failure to make sure that the entire nation's elementary and secondary schools are staffed with qualified teachers" (p.5). Research has shown that education loses many of its newly trained teachers very early in their career (Ingersoll, 2003). While medical doctors are not asked to perform surgical procedures after just several weeks of classes and clinical experiences, teacher candidates are expected to prepare to become teachers with course

work and only a few weeks of in-classroom training (USDOE, 1998). The teaching profession has been identified as having one of the highest rates of attrition among recognized professions (Handley, 2005).

Even time has failed to provide a solution for the challenge of the revolving door of teachers annually. Sixteen years has passed since President Clinton's first speech on the issue of retention. This issue is still as critical in 2012 as it was in 1996. In 2009, President Barack Obama's speech to the nation stated that it is time to end simply having a conversation about education reform and start actually doing it. The time is at hand to make education America's national mission. (USDOE, 2009). The Obama administration has implemented a new set of regulations with the Race to the Top program within the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) of 2009. This historical piece of legislation was designed to invest in the American education system. One of the focuses of The Race to the Top (RT3) program is to attract and retain great teachers in the classrooms of American schools. The intent of RT3 is to close the achievement gap by increasing effective support that teachers receive, revising policies focused on retention and working to ensure that the most talented teachers are placed in subjects and schools where they are most needed (USDOE, 2009).

Retaining teachers has been noted as a historical challenge in the American public school system. The teacher retention challenge tends to manifest itself as shortages, attrition, retention difficulties, and mobility. These specific challenges have been described in literature for centuries (Heiny, 2008). All through the 1970's there had been a surplus of teachers, layoffs were common and jobs in teaching were hard to come by (Ingersoll, 2002). Within the previous twenty years, concerns regarding an alarming

teacher shortage in the nation's public schools has been repeatedly raised (Flint & Morton, 2009) with no clear solution being brought forward. A number of studies suggest these burdens are likely to be felt most strongly in low-income schools with a large number of minorities, where teachers with insufficient credentials are often employed (Achinstein, Ogawa, & Speiglmán, 2004; Berry, 2004; Darling-Hammond, 2004; Malen & Rice, 2004). Compared to other professions, teaching has a relatively high turnover rate with approximately 17% of all U.S. teachers either having left the profession or moved to a different position (Kopkowski, 2008). A fact almost more astonishing is that these rates climb to almost 50% in schools with high-poverty rates (Hare & Heap, 2001a; Shockley, Guglielmino & Watlington, 2006). High poverty public schools have a far higher rate of turnover than more affluent public schools (Hare & Heap 2001b; Imazeki, 2005; Ingersoll, 2003). Urban schools with high poverty rates are challenged with attempting to recruit and retain qualified teachers (Strong, 2005). Students that attend high poverty, high minority schools are desperately in need of high quality expert teachers if improvement is to be seen. However, these students are almost twice as likely to have beginning or less experienced teachers (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2005). Many of the teachers that do come to urban schools do not stay (Shann, 2001). As a result, these schools suffer a great amount of teacher turnover annually and student achievements rates are low. Often these schools are labeled as low-performing or failing schools.

Urban school teachers often find themselves at the center of innumerable social challenges (Burnett, 1994). The challenges that teachers encounter in urban schools are often reflected in a high degree of teacher turnover, frequently related to burnout, a high

level of teacher absenteeism, low level of classroom instructional and management skills, discipline problems, an overwhelming workload, low pay, lack of support and little respect (Ascher, 1991; McKinney, Berry, Dickerson, & Campbell-Whatley, 2007). Achievements rates tend to be low while rates of disruptive behavior and absenteeism tend to be high. Added to these concerns are a transient population; lack of parental and/or guardian participation in the school lives of the students; and personal economic and family situations that may have a negative impact on students' learning (Burnett 1994). Discipline is just one of the many difficult issues that crop up in the middle grades, which arrive as students' minds and bodies are changing rapidly and in profound ways. It is not an easy time for any student, but the stakes are higher in large urban schools where the percentage of at-risk students is higher (Hardy, 2009). This poses a significant challenge to the teachers of such students.

Although the United States has made important economic progress over the past half century, many of the nation's children remain impoverished. In 2004, according to the Census Bureau, 13 million American children under age eighteen lived in poverty—an overall child poverty rate of 17.8 % (Jacob, 2007). Children who are already disadvantaged do not need poorly prepared teachers (Schoon & Sandaval, 2000). Large numbers of classes in our nation's schools are not staffed with qualified teachers (Ingersoll, 2002). Jacob (2007) found that teachers serving in schools that educate poor and minority children in large cities are more likely to be inexperienced. According to the Alliance for Excellent Education, in a report entitled *Tapping the Potential: Retaining and Developing High Quality New Teachers (2004)*, teachers in all schools are moving out of the profession, but the rate of attrition is roughly 50 % higher in poor schools than

in wealthier ones. In urban districts, teachers tend to have shorter careers than teachers in smaller suburban districts (McKee, 2003). Many urban school districts, particularly, have had difficulties in finding qualified teachers for all of their classrooms (Schoon & Sandaval, 2000). Teachers play a critical role in schooling, particularly in inner-city school districts where children often have less support at home (Jacob, 2007). According to Haberman (1987), the average career of an urban teacher is between three and five years. In a five year period almost one-half of the urban teaching force leaves the profession. Teacher departures are chiefly heightened in schools of high need (Kopkowski, 2008). More troubling is the fact that urban teachers are less likely to stay at the same school for an extended period of time in comparison to suburban teachers (Jacob, 2007).

Student learning and achievement is directly related to the qualifications and experience of the teacher. However in many of the poorest urban schools, where minority students need the best teachers, there are great challenges in hiring and retaining those teachers (Ascher, 1991). Ascher (1991) also contends that urban schools face additional growing challenges such as: limited funds for salaries, educational materials and maintenance of buildings.

The middle grade years are a tightrope of challenges and opportunities (Hardy, 2009) for the student and the teacher. Survey evidence suggests that the average middle school teacher is less prepared and has less experience than the average elementary school teacher (Tucker & Coddling 1998). In middle grades specifically, teacher shortages tend to be even more pronounced than at various other certification levels (Thornton, 2004). Many studies have found that teachers in schools serving poor and

minority children in large cities are more likely to be inexperienced, less likely to be certified, and less likely to have graduated from competitive colleges than their suburban counterparts (Jacob, 2007). Upon leaving the middle grades, students with low academic achievement, are often guided into less challenging classes by their high schools. Consequently these students are less prepared for college work (Chenoweth, 1999). Given the middle grades' critical importance to eventual high school success or failure, one would expect middle school to be a matter of high interest for researchers and policymakers (Hardy, 2009). Unfortunately this is not the case. The exploration of the needs of teachers employed in schools with challenges is critical in order to fully understand the complicated factors that are attributed to the attrition of teachers (Greenlee & Brown, 2009), particularly in urban schools.

Statement of the Problem

The purpose of this study was to investigate factors that urban middle school teachers consider significant in affecting their decision to remain in their current school setting. The factors through the literature as having an impact on all teachers in schools were tested with middle school teachers. Those indicators were gender, age and experience of teacher, educational level of teacher, salary, administrative and collegial support, working conditions and ethnicity. Furthermore, in order for the researcher to gain additional insight regarding the quantitative data gleaned from the respondents, an open ended question was included with the questionnaire to allow participants to expound on their responses. The study determined which indicators were more closely linked to attrition rates of middle school teachers in urban schools.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to seek the factors that teachers perceive are important when contemplating whether to remain in an urban middle school. In addition, the study examined the relationship between gender, ethnicity, experience of teacher, and educational level of teacher, to determine if any of the factors significantly impacted the teacher's decision to remain in a teaching position.

Research Hypotheses

The research hypotheses addressed in this study included:

- H₁: There is no statistically significant difference in administrative and collegial support, teaching environment, job conditions, student relations and standardized criterion-referenced assessments and gender of the teacher.
- H₂: There is no statistically significant difference in administrative and collegial support, teaching environment, job conditions, student relations and standardized criterion-referenced assessments and years of experience of the teacher.
- H₃: There is no statistically significant difference in administrative and collegial support, teaching environment, job conditions, student relations and standardized criterion-referenced assessments and education of the teacher.

H₄: There is no statistically significant difference in administrative and collegial support, teaching environment, job conditions, student relations and standardized criterion-referenced assessments and ethnicity of the teacher.

These four hypotheses provided the framework for the collecting, analyzing, and interpreting data.

Definition of Terms

For the purpose of clarification of the terminology used throughout this study, the following terms are defined:

Attrition – The number of teachers teaching one year that are no longer teaching the following year (Boe, Cook & Sunderland, 2008; Imazeki, 2005).

Career and Life Cycle Context – The timing of marriage, birth of children, geographical migration, retirement and normal career progression of a teacher (Grissmer & Kirby, 1987).

Demonstration of Competency – Teachers (in middle school) must prove that they know the subject they teach with: (1) a major in the subject they teach, (2) equivalent credits to a major in the subject they teach, (3) successful passage of a test developed by the state they teach in, or (4) a graduate degree (USDOE, 2004).

Highly Qualified Teacher – A teacher that has received full certification or licensure, holds a minimum of a bachelor's degree, and has demonstrated competency in the subject matter they teach (USDOE, 2004).

Middle School – A public school consisting of grades six, seven and eight (Simpson, 2009) with students between the ages of 11 and 14 (Moore, 2008)

The Elementary and Secondary Education Act - No Child Left Behind (NCLB) –

The federal legislation affecting education from kindergarten through high school that brought changes to and places major emphasis on teacher quality as a factor to improve student achievement (USDOE, 2002).

Race to the Top (RT3) – The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA)

of 2009 that provided federal funding to save teaching jobs and advance educational reforms and improvements in all levels of education (USDOE, 2009).

Retention – The proportion of teachers in one year who are still teaching the

following year (Boe & Gilford, 1992; Boe, Cook, & Sunderland, 2008).

Salary – A fixed annual sum, paid at regular intervals to an employee for

professional work including benefits (Hinkel, 2008).

Title I school – A school that qualifies for the supplemental grant funding to be

used to improve the academic achievement of educationally disadvantaged and at-risk youth underneath the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (USDOE, 2002).

Turnover – A major change in a teacher's teaching assignment from one year

until the next (Boe, Cook, & Sunderland, 2008).

Urban high poverty school – A school located within an urban area with the

majority of students qualifying for free or reduced lunch (Charles A. Dana Center, 1999).

Delimitations of the Study

The study was conducted under the following delimitations:

1. The data was gathered only from middle school teachers in one school district in the Metropolitan Atlanta area.

2. The identification of significant factors leading to middle school teachers remaining in the classroom is limited to the teacher's point of view.

Assumptions

This study was conducted within the boundaries of the following assumptions:

1. The responses that teachers provide on the questionnaire accurately and honestly represent their experiences and perceptions of the factors that affect their decision to remain in the profession.

Justification of the Study

In light of the previous and current federal legislation, No Child Left Behind and Race to the Top, recruiting and retaining highly qualified teachers is a major concern especially for urban high poverty schools (McKinney, Berry, Dickerson & Campbell-Whatley, 2007). Teacher attrition creates many problems (O'Brien, 2007) and is higher at the middle school level (Miron & Applegate, 2007). The price of teacher attrition is very expensive and incurring an expenditure of approximately \$11,000 or more for each new teacher leaving teaching within their first five years (Ingersoll, 2001). The theory of teacher attrition embeds the patterns of attrition in a career and life cycle context (Grissmer & Kirby, 1987). Unless more attention is given to teacher attrition, focusing specifically on the profile of those high quality teachers, why they are successful and persevere in urban middle schools, teacher attrition will continue to grow and be a national concern.

The justification for this study is to provide administrators and school officials with information on retaining highly qualified veteran teachers in urban middle schools where they are especially needed. This study provided descriptive data that is relevant to

specific factors that teachers perceive as significant and impact their decision to remain in urban middle schools. Finally this study also provided a mechanism by which urban school districts can assess their own unique qualities that can be used to plan and strategize to recruit and retain the most qualified individuals.

Summary

The United States Federal government first addressed K-12 education systematically with the passage and signing of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act in 1965 by President Lyndon B. Johnson. Until recently, education has been a peripheral concern. In 2002, President George W. Bush, signed the revised Elementary and Secondary Education Act, now known as the No Child Left Behind Act to declare America's schools to be on a new path of reform to decrease the achievement gap. With President Bush's educational focus required schools to increase accountability for student performance, focus on what works, reduce bureaucracy, increase flexibility and empower parents. NCLB defined teacher quality and implemented an accountability system with expected yearly achievement levels. Accompanying the mandate for highly qualified teachers, teacher attrition has steadily increased. In 2009, President Barack Obama penned Race to the Top as a vital part of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act to stimulate the economy and invest in education. The success of the educational portion of this legislation is dependent upon the commitment that is shared among educational stakeholders in every community (USDOE, 2009).

The primary purpose of this study was to investigate factors that urban middle school teachers considered significant in affecting their decision to remain in their current school setting.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

The purpose of this study is to assess factors which teachers identify as significant in their decision to remain in urban middle schools. The review will provide an overview of the theoretical framework including theories of Human Capital and teacher attrition, the background of the national teacher quality movement, the *No Child Left Behind Act* (NCLB), the *Race to the Top* (RT3) funding program, teacher shortages, turnover and attrition, effective teachers and student achievement and the challenges and factors of urban middle schools that impact retention. The following information represents the thoughts, findings and prevailing ideas as it relates to teacher retention.

Theoretical Framework of Teacher Attrition

There is no nation that can prosper without an educated population of people and no school system can provide the education needed without talented skilled teachers. Today's teachers must have the ability to effectively communicate through written means and orally; and must be able to motivate, instill confidence and inspire trust in students. Most importantly, these teachers must be able to understand and meet the educational and emotional needs of their students (Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Department of Labor, 2010). Teachers occupy nearly 3.5 million jobs in public and private elementary and secondary schools in the U.S., representing approximately 4% of the total civilian workforce (Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Department of Labor, 2010). Every year however, thousands of qualified teachers are recruited into the profession only to quit in frustration (Wong & Asquith, 2002). An average of a third of new teachers hired leave during the first three years of their employment with almost half of them leaving during

the first five years (National Commission on Teaching and America's Future [NCTAF], 2003). Retaining teachers is documented as a historical challenge with teacher shortages, retention, and mobility in public schools described in literature for centuries (Heiny, 2008). The supply and demand for teachers in public schools in the United States varies from year to year. According to Heiny, teacher turnover is not new to U.S. schools. Heiny notes that in 1939, Elsbree described teachers in the American colonies experiencing short tenure as an early example of the turnover experienced in American schools.

The education of America's students remains as one of our nation's policy concerns (Martinez-Garcia & Slate, 2009). With the issue of teacher attrition constantly growing, states, districts and schools are specifically devoting attention, time and financial resources to initiatives to attract candidates to replace those that are leaving (Voke, 2002). Since states and districts are under new pressure to ensure that a skilled teacher is in every classroom (Olson, 2003), teacher retention has become a major public policy issue (Shockley, Watlington, Morris, Calstrom, Huie & Liberman, 2007). Policymakers have seriously taken notice of the teacher attrition issue with concern and have identified increasing numbers of students enrolling in schools and teachers retiring as a cause of severe teacher shortage (Ingersoll, 2003). Since teacher turnover has moved into the spotlight of public policy (Keller, 2003) more research on the topic is needed to determine the cause of the shortage. There is a strong link between the high rates of teacher attrition and teacher shortage and as a result there is a revolving door where droves of teachers are leaving early (Shockley, Guglielmino & Watlington, 2006). Therefore, understanding why teachers leave is the first step in getting them to stay (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2008).

The Teacher Attrition Theory

Researchers, Grissmer and Kirby, tested a teacher attrition theory based on whether a teacher continued in a teaching position, moved to a teaching position in a different school district, or left the profession altogether, from one school year to the next (Gardner, 2010). Grissmer and Kirby (1987) found that forecasts of teacher attrition rates are a critical and vital component when determining the need in terms of numbers for teachers in the coming years. Teacher attrition is the most important and most sensitive issue in determining the demand for new teachers. The theory of teacher attrition is rooted in the context of the career and life cycle, where the timing of marriage, birth of children, geographical relocation and retirement are all critical in the explanation. Age, experience, availability of professional opportunities, salary, class size and retirement options are also factors that heavily contribute to variation in teacher attrition (Anderson, 2001). The theory of attrition attempts to account for contrasting reasons for the wearing away of the teaching profession by using the explanation of the unique patterns of the life cycle and career stage.

Grissmer and Kirby (1987) also predict that attrition follows a U-shaped curve over the life cycle of the individual and follows a different pattern for men and women due to early marriage for women, relocation after marriage, pregnancy, family responsibilities and outside opportunities. The U-shaped curve represents the age-specific attrition probabilities that will be higher for younger teachers who are early in their career, extremely low for middle-aged teachers during the mid-career phase and higher once again when retirement is near (Grissmer & Kirby, 1987). The researchers state that

the dominant variables that direct attrition patterns are directly connected to events of an individual's life cycle and or career pattern.

The researchers also state that there is not one single factor responsible for the high attrition seen during the first ten years of a teacher's career rather there are several that join together (Grissmer & Kirby, 1987). For example, young teachers accept the least desirable assignments with lower salaries. Eventually, their expectations do not match their actual experiences resulting in the teacher's decision to leave. With fewer debt obligations, teachers in this category are free to easily move. Younger teachers have very high rates of departure and those that have settled in tend to remain through mid-career and leave typically at retirement (Wong & Asquith, 2002). Conversely, in an analysis of national data from a population survey, Harris and Adams (2007) found that teacher turnover is especially high among older teachers which reveal that teachers retire considerably earlier than others in professional fields such as nursing, social work and accounting.

According to Grissmer and Kirby (1987), life cycle events that influence attrition include marriage, migration or relocation, birth of children, entry of children in school and retirement. Additionally, career patterns that affect attrition include movement to better jobs, returning to school for advanced degrees, and moving out of teaching into other education related fields such as counseling and administration. Even though teachers quit teaching for a variety of reasons – one includes personal reasons such as starting a family, a spouse's job relocation and poor health (Strong, 2005). One important point to consider is that a spouse's life cycle and career pattern also heavily influences teacher attrition. Teacher attrition rates can be expected to fluctuate over time in such

areas as a teacher's age, years of experience, demographic composition of employees, employment opportunities in education related markets, and the availability of opportunities within the teaching profession (Kirby & Grissmer, 1993). Several researchers have found that teachers who enter the profession at a later age were less likely to leave early compared to those that enter at younger ages (Behrstock–Sherratt & Cogshall, 2010; Boe & Gilford, 1992; Coggins, Zuckerman & McKelvey, 2010; Hess, 2009). Failure to place attrition decisions in the context of career and life cycle decisions place major limitations on the understanding of teacher attrition (Grissmer & Kirby, 1987). Guarino, Santibanez and Daley (2006) suggest that teachers tend to move into other positions or activities outside of the profession if those professions offer higher salaries, better working conditions and intrinsic rewards.

The Human Capital Theory

“Education is fundamentally a human capital enterprise” (Goldhaber & Hannaway, 2009, p. 5). In the 1960's, Theodore Schultz, an economist, developed the term Human Capital to be a sign of the value of human capacities. Schultz believed that human capital could be invested in just as any other type of capital; through educational training and enhanced benefits that eventually would lead to the improvement in the quality and production of work (Human Capital, n.d.a). Human capital is described as a means of defining and categorizing people's skills and abilities as it pertains to employment (Human Capital, n.d.b).

Xiao (1999) stated that the Human Capital theory proposes that education and training raises productivity of the workers by imparting knowledge and skills that are helpful in increasing the lifetime earnings of the workers. Xiao also found that an

employee's participation in decision-making and responsibility sharing affects their ability to act. Therefore, the more that an employee is involved and invested in the operation of the organization, the more productive the employee will be.

Policymakers have recognized, as in other fields such as business, healthcare, and the military, that a range of incentives are used to compensate people to work in challenging and difficult situations (Berry, Rasberry, & Williams, 2007). The teacher attrition theory extracts from the human capital theory the concepts of occupation, location and firm-specific human capital in an effort to provide an explanation for life cycle occupational movements (Grissmer & Kirby, 1987). The fundamental principle of the human capital theory is that individuals choose occupations where they will receive the maximum return (Kirby & Grissmer, 1993). The success of today's schools is largely determined by the human capital of teachers. These are signs that signal trouble with the quality and distribution within the nation's schools (Goldhaber & Hannaway, 2009). Due to the obvious importance of teachers within schools, many school districts have begun to pursue a wide variety of strategies designed to increase teacher quality in hard to staff schools. The most widely used strategy is the increase in wages which is intended to attract and ultimately retain better candidates (Krieg, 2004). As an individual remains in an occupation there is accumulation of human capital which eventually translates into wage premiums (Kirby & Grissmer, 1993) resulting in the decline of attrition. There are many trained teachers in the nation's schools, however researchers and policymakers agree that schools are doing very little to attract and retain the most qualified teachers (Goldhaber & Hannaway, 2009).

The Teacher Quality Movement

The central focus of public education in the United States is much broader than the recent focus to increase student achievement measured by standardized tests. Traditionally, the United States has intended for public education to increase knowledge of core academic subjects, prepare students to be engaged citizens, productive workers and creative individuals who will develop fresh innovations in the arts and sciences (Whitcomb & Rose, 2008). According to Whitcomb and Rose (2008), academic achievement is only one outcome of a US public education. However, the current method of measuring student learning is narrow in scope. Therefore, the drive to enhance teacher quality focuses only on increasing student achievement as measured by standardized test results.

Teacher quality is seen as the most significant strategy to reducing achievement gaps that exist across racial and economic lines (Whitcomb & Rose, 2008). Every year thousands of qualified teachers are recruited into the profession only to quit in that frustration about two years later (Wong & Asquith, 2002). Since the 1970's and 1980's, research has shown teacher attrition to be a problem with approximately 25% of all people with teaching certificates either never beginning their career in education or leaving within a few years of starting (Croasmun, Hampton, & Herrmann, 1997). Studies suggest that almost as many as 50% of new teachers leave the teaching field within five years of entering the profession (Ingersoll, 2003; Grissmer & Kirby, 1997; Theobald, 1990). Quality teachers are central to the promotion of student learning (Borman & Dowling, 2008). As teachers stay in the career longer, they build confidence and build from experience, becoming more effective (Ingle, 2007). Major learning of the craft of

teaching occurs within the first few years of teaching and the largest impact on a teacher occurs during the first year of experience (Hanushek, Kain, O'Brien & Rivkin, 2005). However many of these teachers are instead given the toughest assignments, receive the least amount of support, and are assigned to the most difficult schools (Moore, 2008). Consequently, these teachers are often seeking to better their careers or are dissatisfied with their career (Ingersoll, 1997), and decide to leave. This cycle forces districts to hire less qualified teachers, assign teachers trained in other areas to teach in the understaffed area and the extensive use of substitute teachers (Ingersoll, 1997; 2003).

In 1994, Hugh Prince, Linda Darling-Hammond along with others formed the National Commission on Teaching and America's Future. This group was organized to address the needs of teaching what the nation could do to ensure the preparation of excellent teachers (Martinez-Garcia & Slate, 2009). In 1996, the Commission focused on the condition of the teaching profession and published the report *What Matters Most: Teaching for America's Future* (NCTAF, 2003). The 1996 NCTAF report stated "The single most important strategy for achieving America's educational goals is a blueprint for recruiting, preparing and supporting excellent teachers in all of America's schools" (p. 10). The goal of the plan was to ensure that every school had teachers with the necessary knowledge and skills to effectively teach so that all students could learn (Martinez-Garcia & Slate, 2009).

There is a growing consensus among educational professionals that teacher quality is one of the most significant factors in student achievement (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2010). There are large numbers of classrooms that are staffed with less qualified teachers. Schools often have difficulty filling teaching positions with

qualified candidates and often hire less qualified teachers (Ingersoll, 1997). The impact of having a high quality teacher can be profound on students (Goldhaber & Anthony, 2005). Hanushek and Rivkin (2003), state that a string of good teachers can overcome the deficits a child may have in their home and may move students with good preparation even farther. Teacher quality is an important component to student success (Krieg, 2004) and increasing the quality of teachers may be a key instrument in improving student outcomes (Rockoff, 2003).

The subsequent focus on teacher quality has brought an increase in districts and schools implementing various kinds of reforms that many researchers in education have been calling for since the 1970s (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2004). With attrition being the single largest factor determining demand for teachers in the United States (Croasmun, Hampton, & Herrmann, 1997), city schools specifically struggle to recruit and retain quality teachers (Keiffer-Barone & Ware, 2001).

During the 1990-1991 school year, 190,000 new teachers entered the teaching field with 91% of them leaving the profession just one year later. Three years later, 193,000 new teachers were hired and in the following 12 months about 213,000, about 110% of those recently hired left the profession (Myers, 2008). The end result of this type of revolving door of teachers is that many of the schools are staffed with a disproportionate number of inexperienced and untrained teachers (Loeb, Darling-Hammond, & Luczak, 2005). This type of high attrition rate weakens the *collective knowledge* of a school (Loeb, Darling-Hammond, & Luczak, 2005). Retaining quality teachers is paramount if the students in the United States are going to maintain their place on the global stage (Darling-Hammond, 2000). Improving the quality of our teachers is a

necessary ingredient in the improvement of the schools in our nation (Goldhaber & Hannaway, 2009). Clewell, Campbell and Perlman (2007) found that highly effective schools have a higher quality teaching force that is very committed and willing to *go the extra mile*. These teachers have high expectations for their students, and take responsibility for their students' learning. The impact of having a teacher of high quality is profound (Goldhaber & Anthony, 2005). Students that are assigned to quality teachers can and will learn and achieve (Morris, 2007).

No Child Left Behind (NCLB)

Historically, federal support for elementary and secondary education has been reserved (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2005) as education has been delegated as a state mandate. For decades the approach to control the quality of the United States teacher has been to closely supervise who is allowed to enter the profession. In the early 1980's, a series of reports focusing on the prediction of a severe teacher shortage in elementary and secondary schools, were published to bring national attention to this growing problem (Ingersoll, 2001). If the national goal of providing an equitable education to children across the nation was to be met, it was critical that efforts be concentrated on developing and retaining high quality teachers in every community (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2005). Only within the last decade has the federal focus been shifted to spotlight teacher quality (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2005). Placing a high quality teacher in front of every child in the nation has become the most important thing a school can do to improve student achievement (Hare, Heap & Raack, 2001). High levels of attrition create significant decreases in the performance of students as a result the concern over student and school performance pushes this issue of attrition

forward (Croasmun, Hampton & Herrmann, 1999). There are many dimensions of improving teacher quality, one is teacher retention. Teacher recruitment and retention have now become a topic of state and national interest (Texas Center for Educational Research, 1999).

The No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) of 2001 tried to assist children in reaching high academic standards by requiring that all classes be taught by a *Highly Qualified Teacher* (HQT) (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2005). The term HQT sets minimum standards for teacher knowledge and focuses on content knowledge (Whitcomb & Rose, 2008). The NCLB effort financially supported by the federal government seeks to improve the performance of groups of students that traditionally fall behind academically. This reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA), NCLB mandated that schools meet specific minimum proficiency requirements on standardized tests as schools as well as individual subgroups (USDOE, 2001). Children who are faced with high-stakes testing for promotion and graduation need teachers with more knowledge and skill (Thomas B. Fordham Foundation, 1999) in order to be successful. According to the United States Department of Education, a highly qualified teacher is described as one who has full state certification, holds a minimum of a bachelor's degree and has demonstrated competency in the subject matter. The Commission on NCLB, developed to guide the reauthorization of NCLB, defined an effective teacher as one capable of improving student achievement as measured by student performance on standardized tests (Whitcomb & Rose, 2008).

NCLB established a series of measures to hold schools accountable for progress yearly. One measure specifically focused on teacher quality nationwide (Jacob, 2007).

NCLB crucially changed the way that the nation thought about education and with the movement to require that all teachers were highly qualified; the federal government made teacher quality a priority for our nation, worthy of the necessary resources (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2005). If schools are to retain highly qualified teachers to improve student achievement, resources to support this goal must be committed by federal education agencies, states and districts (Berry, Darling-Hammond, Hirsch, Robinson & Wise, 2006). The NCLB legislation recognized “professional learning’s key role in school improvement and made a large sum of money available for schools to conduct professional development for training teachers” (Lowden, 2005, p. 2). NCLB funding should be focused and used to ensure that every teacher in a high need school received comprehensive induction (Berry, Darling-Hammond, Hirsch, Robinson & Wise, 2006) and the necessary resources to increase teacher retention. NCLB required that states provide evidence that an increasing number of teachers were participating in high-quality professional learning (USDOE, 2002) to increase their capacity to remain in the teaching profession.

In 2011, Georgia submitted an ESEA flexibility request to the United States Department of Education to be granted waivers from the confines of the standards of NCLB. Georgia was one of only ten states to receive the waiver that granted flexibility to the *narrowly defined* success of No Child Left Behind. The granted waivers provides Georgia with the ability to adjust and refocus the levels of acceptable student achievement goals and successes.

Georgia has implemented several standards to comply with the federal requirements of the NCLB waivers including redefining school achievement, considering achievement data from all content areas to identify schools, setting performance targets to replace Annual Measureable Objectives, and implementing flexible funding options (GADOE, 2012).

Race to the Top

Crowe (2011) states that many factors have been previously noted as critical to the improvement of schools, however strengthening teachers is crucial if a difference is to be truly seen. In 2009, the United States Department of Education again made teacher quality one of its *pillars of reform* (Walsh & Jacobs, 2009) with the implementation of the *Race to the Top* (RT3) competitive funding program. The goals of RT3 are to improve student achievement, close the existing achievement gaps between the best and lowest performing schools, improve high school graduation rates, ensure post-secondary success, and address the four American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) education reform areas (Charter School Specialists, Inc, 2010). Authorized through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009, states were provided an opportunity to apply for a grant that can be used for implementation of innovative ways to enhance the quality of teachers and provide incentives to increase teacher retention (USDOE, 2009). The USDOE considers all states in need of making significant adjustments to the quality of teachers (USDOE, 2009) that are employed by each system. However as of September 2010, only 11 states (Delaware, Tennessee, Florida, Georgia, Hawaii, Maryland, Massachusetts, New York, Ohio and Rhode Island) and the District of Columbia have been awarded the RT3 funding (Charter School Specialists, Inc., 2010).

The most challenging portion that states have encountered in applying for the RT3 grant has been developing a plan to address the four ARRA assurances (human capital, struggling schools, data infrastructures, and standards and accountability (Walsh & Jacobs, 2009). Walsh and Jacobs (2009), report that applying states must have planned pioneering and ground-breaking strategies to address the RT3 goals and have their applications approved to receive funding. Most importantly, RT3 has been designed to make improvements in teacher effectiveness and equitably distribute qualified teachers to schools and classrooms where they are most needed. In addition, these RT3 funds are to be used to provide intensive support and intervention for the lowest performing schools within districts of awarded systems (USDOE, 2009).

Teacher Shortages, Turnover and Attrition

One of the most significant challenges that primary and secondary schools are faced with is retaining qualified teachers (Perrachoine, Rosser, & Petersen, 2008). Beginning in 1999, concerns regarding the supply of teachers for the elementary and secondary schools across the nation moved to the forefront of the education policy agenda (Murphy, DeArmond, & Guin, 2003). It is widely believed that severe teacher shortages are confronting our elementary and secondary schools (Ingersoll, 2003). For more than a decade, Ingersoll has conducted research projects that have examined the range of issues concerning teacher supply and demand (Ingersoll, 1997; 2001; 2002; 2003). In some aspects teacher shortage is correct – student enrollment has increased, more teaching positions are available and the teacher work force has increased (Ingersoll, 2003).

Although a greater number of students of school age are entering school and teacher retirements are increasing, the primary demand for new teachers is for the most part affected by teachers' moving from their current schools or simply leaving their jobs (Ingersoll, 1997).

The teaching profession is plagued with chronic and relatively high annual turnover as compared to other professions (Ingersoll, 2003). A phenomenon once disguised by the phrase *teacher shortage*, teacher turnover has moved into the limelight of public policy discussions (Keller, 2003). Teacher turnover is a costly occurrence (NCTAF, 2003). Ingersoll (1997; 2001), suggests that organizational factors within a school such as low salaries, lack of administrative support, student discipline and little faculty input in decision making causes teachers to leave their schools or jobs contributing to the high rates of turnover often seen in the education profession. He further states improving these areas would possibly decrease turnover and eliminate shortages.

High teacher turnover diminishes the sense of community within a school which is a hallmark of strong schools (NCTAF, 2002). Martinez-Garcia and Slate (2009) describe the high teacher turnover crisis as having a direct impact on student achievement, teacher quality and accountability. The strong effects of teachers on student achievement can be traced back to the late 1960's and the results of the Coleman report which concluded that teacher characteristics tended to explain the variations in student achievement (Borman & Dowling, 2008). The efforts to improve the quality of public school teachers face some difficult hurdles, the most disheartening is the growing shortage of teachers (Rockoff, 2003). Johnson and Birkeland (2003) found that teachers

who were serving wealthier students were more likely to be retained than those serving poorer populations. In contrast, those teachers that serve in poor urban communities are most likely to leave. The researchers explain that a school that loses a good teacher also loses that teacher's familiarity with school practices, experiences with the school curriculum and involvement with students, parents and colleagues (Johnson & Birkeland, 2003).

In many United States schools, student achievement is alarmingly low (Boyd, Lankford, Grossman, Loeb, & Wyckoff, 2007). Students at-risk of failing need a high-quality teacher in order to attain high standards and graduate with the necessary skills to succeed in the workforce or in college classes (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2005). Great teachers make students successful (StudentsFirst, 2011). However, in any year there are relatively large numbers of teachers leaving the profession for good.

The Department of Labor estimates that teacher attrition actually costs school districts approximately 30% of the leaving teacher's salary which in reality costs tax payers over \$2 billion yearly (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2005). Despite the enormous monetary and human costs, school districts are discarding teachers at shocking rates only to hire a new set of teachers and lose them too (Wong & Asquith, 2002). Teacher turnover may also include teachers that change fields from one content area to another, teachers changing schools or those teachers that choose to exit the profession totally (Croasmun, Hampton, & Herrmann, 1997). According to Boe, Bobbit, and Cook (1993), the attrition of teachers is a factor of teacher turnover and is defined as the number of teachers teaching in one year that are no longer teaching in the following year (Texas Education Association, 1995). Teacher attrition is an important concern for large

urban areas (Lapin, 2003). Attrition has a 50% or higher rate and is even more of a concern when examining its impact on poor schools (NCTAF, 2003). Teacher attrition is very expensive and bears enormous costs on a school's financial situation (McCandless, 2009). Each year districts attempt to retain as many teachers as possible and hire new teachers to fill vacancies. Research shows attrition among teachers to be a significant problem (Croasmun, Hampton, & Herrmann, 1997) especially in urban high-poverty schools. The rate of attrition among novice teachers is exorbitant (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2005). One-quarter of all novice teachers leave the profession within their first five years with the rates climbing as high as 50% in schools serving a high poverty population (Hare, Heap, & Raack, 2001). Under-qualified teachers and the least experienced are often given the most challenging assignments in special education, urban or high-poverty schools (Strong, 2005). Teachers are the largest single budget item for school districts and ultimately the factor that most determines a school's quality (Hanushek & Rivkin, 2003). A study in Texas found that the cost to replace teachers that leave the profession can range from an extremely conservative 20% of a teacher's salary to a high estimate of 150% of the salary based upon variables included in the definition of cost (Benner, 2000). According to Myers (2008), using a conservative figure of 25% of an employee's salary, if a district loses approximately 100 teachers that averaged a salary of \$32,000 per year, it would cost that district a total of \$800,000 to replace those teachers.

Teacher turnover research has produced consistent results about the characteristics of individuals that are more likely to leave the profession. For example those teachers that fall within the U-shaped curve of the Teacher Attrition theory, non-

minorities, and teachers in the science and mathematics fields (Ingle, 2007) are more likely to depart from the profession. Although teacher turnover is widely accepted in many areas of the country, its nature and the causes can guide the development of new policy leading to the implementation of practices that can begin to reduce the occurrence of teacher attrition.

Factors that Affect Turnover and Attrition

One of the most severe tests that face local school districts today is the challenge of attracting and retaining teachers. The most common myth being continuously repeated in the world of education is that there is a teacher shortage. Research shows that the problem is really not *shortage* but retention (Ingersoll, 2001, 2003; National Commission on Teaching and America's Future, 2002) that is affected by a number of factors. Research states that the best and brightest teachers are often among the first to leave (Ingersoll, 2004).

The United States has a shameful history of dumping its least effective and qualified teachers into schools that serve the neediest children. According to Shields et al, less than 10 years ago, more than 20% of schools in California had more than 20 percent of their staffs teaching without credentials almost exclusively low-income schools (2001). Nearly 15 years ago, Gonzalez (1995) reported that teachers' career decisions were determined by external, employment and personal factors. External factors were described as societal and economic conditions that were separate from the control of the school district and the teacher. External factors include recessions, labor-market trends, changing birth rates and population trend shifts. Gonzalez further discussed four major employment factors that impact directly and indirectly the career choice of teachers.

Professional qualifications, work conditions, work rewards and commitment all have significant impact on a teacher's decision to remain in the profession. Beginning teachers were most often faced with the challenge of student discipline, parent difficulties, and inadequate or insufficient materials. Some states recognizing this as a factor of attrition have incorporated policies that provide support to assist these teachers while they are developing their professional experience. However many more novice teachers are employed within environments felt unsupported which tends to lead to stress and burnout (Gonzalez, 1995). The researcher further noted the lack of administrative support, collegial and parental support and insufficient involvement in decision making leads to attrition among teachers. A teacher's personal factors make up the final conditions that impact attrition. Gonzalez (1995) states that the age of a teacher is one of the most consistent correlations found amongst teacher attrition; teachers under the age of 35 are more likely to have the greatest level of attrition. Other factors such as marriage, birth of children, and relocation are often cited as reasons for interruption and termination of teaching career, specifically during the early years.

Norton and Kelly (1997) found five reasons that teachers have left the profession: (a) too much paperwork, (b) student performance accountability, (c) student discipline issues, (d) lack of administrative support, and (e) low salaries. Luekens, Lyter and Fox (2001), conducted a survey of approximately 8,000 teachers that revealed the following reasons for teachers leaving the profession or moving from one school to the other: (a) opportunity for a better teaching assignment, (b) dissatisfaction with support from administrators, (c) dissatisfaction with workplace conditions, (d) better salary or benefits, (e) retirement, (f) pursuit of another career, and (g) child rearing or health. Smithers and

Robinson (2003) also identified five main factors that influenced teachers' decision to leave as the workload, challenges, the situation of the school, salary and personal circumstances. By far workload was found to be most important and salary the least important (Smithers & Robinson, 2003). Most novices leave the profession as a result of low salaries, lack of support, poor working conditions, inadequate time to prepare, and having little to no opportunity to participate in decision making (Darling-Hammond, 2003; Hirsch, 2006; Ingersoll, 2003, 2004). Johnson and Birkeland (2003) documented that some dissatisfied teachers left their current positions in search of different teaching assignments that provided support in their efforts to implement the curriculum, to establish effective lines of parent-teacher communication and to obtain effective administrative and collegial support.

Working Conditions

Working conditions is identified as a major reason for the early departure from the profession or the transfer to another school by some (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2008). In many urban schools, the conditions in which teachers work in seem to be even more important than wages (Jacob, 2007). In a survey conducted by the Alliance for Excellent Education (2008), public school teachers who transferred from one school to another indicated that the move was to obtain a better teaching assignment. Norton (1999) found that the more favorable the work conditions the higher teacher satisfaction level. Olson (2003) agrees that working conditions are a vital element in explaining whether teachers leave or stay in high poverty schools. McKee also states that urban schools are severely affected by teacher shortages and states that workplace conditions often can predict attrition and burnout.

Educators often deal with an unusual set of workplace conditions (Viadero, 2008). Work conditions such as administrative support and leadership, the school climate, teacher independence in the classroom, student discipline and parental support are all directly related to the job satisfaction of teachers. Each of these factors shows stronger relationships with job satisfaction than salary and benefits; these are of vital importance in teacher retention efforts (Norton, 1999). Viadero reports that workplace conditions often trump salary and leadership is found to be a key factor in either positively or negatively affecting workplace conditions (2008).

In a 2004 study, Glennie, Coble and Allen surveyed teachers in various “hard-to-staff North Carolina schools to gather their opinions on the impact of various educational policies implemented within their schools. These schools tended to have higher percentages of students scoring below grade level on end-of-grade tests, higher percentages of students who were eligible for free and reduced priced lunch, were ethnic minorities and were primarily middle schools located in urban areas. The researchers discovered that when asked their opinions regarding working conditions, there was some dissatisfaction noted in each category (Time Management, Facilities and Resources, School Leadership, Personal Empowerment and Opportunities for Professional Development) however the teachers were most satisfied with *Leadership* and less satisfied with *Time Management*.

Although other factors such as pay influence teacher attrition, working conditions such as teacher participation in decision-making, administrative support and school climate are all statistically associated with teacher turnover (Ingersoll, 2001). Brown and Wynn (2007) found that when teachers consider whether to continue teaching or to leave,

the school environment plays a major role. Work place conditions play a key role in teachers remaining in the field of teaching (Weiss, 1999). The more difficult working conditions decrease the attractiveness of teaching relative to alternative occupations that teachers may pursue. Supportive workplace conditions such as appropriate workloads, collegial interaction, professional development, opportunities for participation in the decision-making process and support with student discipline (Weiss, 1999) are vital in impacting teacher retention.

Administrative and Collegial Support

Administrative and Collegial Support is another vital factor that contributes to the decision of teachers to leave their school or the profession. Support from the school leader has been found to be a significant factor that affects a teacher's decision to stay, move or leave the profession (Lynch, 2010). In order to help retain quality teachers in a school, the instructional leader must help provide good physical working conditions (Ingle, 2007). From providing adequate supplies and materials to negotiate through challenging situations, the instructional leader is responsible for establishing a positive environment. Lynch (2010) states that in an effort to impact retention, principals must use a variety of strategies to establish an environment where teachers will want to remain. Using strategies such as demonstrating strong leadership, supporting staff and being accessible to teachers can create an environment in which teachers will want to stay in the teaching field (Lynch, 2010).

In a study conducted by Gardner (2010), music teachers indicated they were least satisfied with the frequency in which administrators talked with them regarding their instructional practices. Freeman (2005) suggests that positive relationships with

administrators promote job satisfaction and less teacher turnover. Delisio (2005) states many teachers leave due to the lack of support they experience within the schools where they work. When teachers find that their opinions and decisions are valued and they have input in a collaborative problem-solving network, they are committed and more willing to remain. Ingersoll (2001) found a strong link between organizational conditions and employee motivation, commitment and turnover. O'Brien (2007) concluded that cooperation and good working relationships with colleagues were most valuable to teachers despite feeling frustrated in other areas; as a result these relationships often played a significant role in reducing the number of teachers leaving their current assignment. Support is noted as a significant factor in helping teachers feel that their work is valued in an arena where recognition is often lacking (O'Brien, 2007). O'Brien also found that relationships are highly valued by teachers and more collaborative relationships with supervisors would enhance retention of teachers in buildings.

Lower teacher attrition has consistently been found in schools that have more administrative support and higher levels of faculty decision making (Ingersoll, 2001; Brown & Wynn, 2007). In schools with the lowest turnover rates, teachers cited daily working conditions such as administrator accessibility and time to plan with colleagues as reasons to remain at their schools (Southeast Center for Teacher Quality, 2002). According to McKee (2003), teachers in low-achieving schools indicated that they were unhappy with relationships between teachers more than teachers in high achieving schools, which makes attracting and retaining the best teachers difficult to accomplish.

Principals may be able to significantly affect the commitment of teachers when they implement strategies that encourage teachers, provide feedback and use shared decision making (McKee, 2003).

A major focus of recent school reform has been the decentralization of power at the school level (Lynch, 2010). This reform has led many schools to involve teachers in the decisions that most impact their work. Teachers are more likely to observe the terms of the decision if they have been involved in the decision-making process. Teachers will gain an appreciation for the operation of the school if they can witness how critical decisions are made (Lynch, 2010).

A lack of input in decision-making regarding assessment, curriculum, policy and scheduling can also have a negative effect on teachers resulting in their decision to leave the profession (Certo & Fox, 2002). Teachers' involvement in school decision-making is seen as extremely valuable because it allows those closest to students to make and carryout decisions improve their schools (Cheng, 2008). Principals can ensure a lower teacher turnover rate when faculty is supported, valued and encouraged to participate in decision making (Cornella, 2010).

Salary, Gender and Ethnicity

According to a report published by the Texas Public Policy Foundation (2002) teachers primarily leave the classroom for other reasons such as student disciplinary problems and working conditions rather than pay. Very few teachers leave their teaching careers because of salary. In a study conducted by Imazeki (2005), non-white women were more likely to leave in general but the effect was different if they taught larger proportion of non-white students. Imazeki (2005) also found that higher instructional

spending could reduce female attrition while higher spending per pupil increases attrition. Furthermore, higher salary rates are generally associated with lower attrition however if salaries are higher in surrounding districts, attrition outside of the profession increases (Imazeki, 2005). There have been numerous policy responses suggested and/or adopted in an effort to attract teachers to hard-to-staff schools and subjects, such as student loan forgiveness, increased salaries, housing assistance, and combat pay. While some teachers do respond to salary increases, there is evidence that supports the fact that non-financial features of the work environment are also crucial considerations in the decisions to leave or stay in the classroom (Ingle, 2007).

National data revealed that male and female teachers stay, move and leave at approximately the same rates. However a study conducted in Texas confirmed that males left at slightly higher rates than females. When the first five years of teaching is examined, on average females leave at a slightly higher rate than males except during the first year when leaving teaching is dangerously higher for males (Texas Center for Educational Research, 1999). Smithers and Robinson (2003), state leavers more likely tended to be female and found no link to ethnicity. In addition, the researchers found that males were more likely to identify extrinsic rewards such as salary, status and approval to remain in urban middle schools. Hancock (2008) found that female music teachers in comparison to males were more likely to be at risk for attrition. Also discovered was the fact that minority teachers appeared to have less of an opportunity to be retained in a school than non-minority teachers did (Hancock, 2008).

Age, Experience and Educational Level

A teacher's age seems to have a direct effect on turnover. The teachers that are younger have extremely high rates of departure than those who have gotten comfortable within the middle stages of their teaching career. Smithers and Robinson (2003) found that leavers tended to be young with fewer years of service. The researchers further state that leaving tended to be age related with teachers at both ends of the spectrum being more likely to leave. Teaching is one of the few professions where a novice has the same responsibilities as a 25-year veteran (Keiffer-Barone & Ware, 2001). Most often new teachers are given the toughest assignments even though they are the least prepared (Darling-Hammond, 1996). These young teachers are particularly vulnerable because they are more than likely assigned to low-performing students (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2005). First-year teachers that were identified as being less effective in improving student performance on standardized test scores tended to have higher attrition rates than those that were more effective teachers (Boyd, et. al, 2007). Smith (2003) noted that it essentially takes three years for a new teacher to become competent. However, more often than not, these teachers have moved on before reaching their potential fully. Jacob (2007) reported that students of teachers in their first or second year teaching consistently scored lower than those with more experience. However, beyond the first few years of teaching, experience does not appear to reveal any importance (Jacob, 2007). Boyd et al (2009) found that turnover rates are higher for younger and older teachers than for middle-aged teachers. According to Boyd et al (2009), older teachers are more likely to transfer to other schools and to leave teaching specifically.

Neighborhood Ethnicity and Condition

Imazeki (2005) notes working in a high poverty urban or rural school district is a significant factor that contributes to the early departure of teachers. When given the opportunity to leave schools that serve poor, low-performing nonwhite students, many teachers chose to leave (Boyd et al. 2009). The researchers found that when considering the demographics of the school and neighborhood, teachers were more likely to leave schools with higher proportions of black and Hispanic students (Boyd et al., 2009). Scherff and Hahs-Vaughn (2008) found that the odds of teachers leaving the profession were slightly six times higher in schools where more than 20% of students qualified for free and reduced lunch in contrast to teachers in schools where less than 20% of students qualified for free and reduced lunch.

Common reasons that teachers identified as causes for leaving low-performing schools include (a) discipline problems, (b) lack of parental support, (c) underachieving students, (d) class sizes and (e) dealing with students of different cultural backgrounds (McKinney et al., 2007).

Of all public schools, those positioned in urban, low-income communities by far suffer the most from staffing problems (NCTAF, 2003; Ingersoll 2001, 2002, 2003). However, teachers in high-poverty schools are more likely to migrate to other schools or leave the district than those in low-poverty schools (Ingersoll, 2003).

Teacher Effectiveness, Retention and Student Achievement

There is a growing consensus among educators and researchers that the most critical factor in determining positive student achievement is the quality of teachers.

Therefore it is crucial that efforts be focused on developing and retaining high-quality teachers in every community and at every grade level (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2005), particularly urban middle schools.

Over the last 10 years, policymakers and business leaders have come to understand what many parents have always known, teachers make the greatest difference in the success and achievement of students (Berry, Daughtrey, & Wieder, 2009). Chenoweth (1999), states that one most prevalent problems found relating to the low academic performance of middle grades students is that teachers are often unprepared to teach the subjects that they are assigned to teach. She notes a startling finding that a number of middle school English teachers were not English or language arts majors but majored in elementary education, which does not allow them to have the necessary foundation to teach such an important content area (Chenoweth, 1999). A teacher's decision to remain or leave a particular school is dependent on a variety of factors ranging from a teacher's personal characteristics to the level of satisfaction experienced within a school's environment (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2008).

While highly qualified teachers significantly increase student achievement (Darling-Hammond & Youngs, 2002), finding and retaining good quality teachers has been a long standing problem (O'Brien, 2007). Teacher quality is significant to every student. Teachers that are underprepared for the subject they are assigned to will carry that weakness into the classroom and could possibly produce weak students (Terry, 2009). Teachers that experienced opportunities to reflect, practice and receive feedback found that experience to be highly valuable (Freedman & Appleman, 2008) and were most likely to remain within the profession. Teachers who remain in the profession report

being satisfied with their work as a teacher along with the importance and responsibility of teaching (Winn, 2006). According to Winn, the principal, operating as the school's instructional leader, has the ability to influence and aid teachers in satisfying their needs thereby keeping teachers in the profession.

It is clear that the quality of the teacher is the most important factor related to the school in terms of raising student performance and achievement (Peacock, 2011). Student achievement may be negatively affected when teachers choose to no longer remain at a school during the school year. Teacher long-term absences prevent schools from consistently implementing instructional practices, cause disruptions to regular routines and classroom procedures, and reduce depth and rigor of instructional intensity (Miller, Murnane & Willett, 2007). One study found that students scored lower on standardized test scores when receiving four or more weeks of instruction from a substitute teacher (Damle, 2009). In a study conducted by Miller, Murnane, & Willett (2007), the researchers found the rate of teacher absences was higher in schools where student attendance was also low. When teachers are not in their classrooms for extended periods of time, opportunities for student instruction are severely reduced (Clotfelter, Ladd & Vigdor, 2007) and thus student achievement is dramatically impaired.

High Poverty Urban Middle Schools

In middle grades, teacher shortages appear to be more pronounced than in the other facets of elementary and secondary education (Thornton, 2004). Urban high-poverty schools lose approximately one-fifth of their teaching force yearly (American Teacher, 2005) leaving these schools with deficits to contend with even before the new school year begins. No schools are truly immune to the teacher turnover problem but

schools in areas that are identified as low poverty experience almost half of the turnover that high-poverty schools experience (American Teacher, 2005). With the tendency to be assigned beginning, and more often than not, inexperienced teachers, higher rates of turnover are expected at urban high-poverty schools. Turnover in schools such as these is detrimental to the school culture and students are unable to benefit from the value-added contribution of skills gained from the teacher's experience, a characteristic found to have a positive relationship with student achievement (Ingle, 2007).

When middle schools were initially established, the belief was that separating those middle grade years, would allow schools to be better prepared to address the needs of those adolescents emotionally and academically (Byrnes & Ruby, 2007). Today there is a great deal of dissatisfaction for the middle school concept, stemming primarily from the increased state focus on accountability and assessment (Mizell, 2002). Urban middle schools primarily composed of high poverty minority students consistently rank as the *underperformers* of the U.S. educational system (Blafanz, Herzog, & MacIver, 2007) and the public is unimpressed with this level of middle school achievement (Mizell, 2002). However, schools that serve inner-city children face considerable challenges in preparing the students to become productive citizens when they reside in underprivileged neighborhoods (Jacob, 2007). Often during the middle school years the plight of urban education is defeated (Balfanz & MacIver, 2000). Urban schools often suffer from a greater level of complication than other schools experience simply due to the complexity of the urban community (Haberman & Richards, 1990). Students become disengaged from school and learning ultimately not receiving the much needed academic preparation they need to succeed in high school (Balfanz & MacIver, 2000). Urban students

frequently have a disjointed educational year as a result of being subjected to multiple teachers (Thompson, 2007). The “needs of urban students are great” (Stanford, 2001, p. 75) and urban schools are consistently under-resourced and poverty-bound (Thompson, 2007). The graduation rate crisis in the United States has been magnified in urban middle schools due in part to the characteristics of the neighborhood, disengagement of students and high levels of teacher turnover and vacancies in those schools (Balfanz, Herzog, & MacIver, 2007). Determining the variables that can reduce retention is vital to the success of middle schools (Moore, 2008).

The challenges that urban districts face in attracting and hiring teachers simply means that teachers in urban schools are often less qualified with respect to experience, educational background and certification (Jacob, 2007). Teachers play a critical role in schooling particularly in the inner city schools where often these students have less support at home (Jacob, 2007). Often public education within the inner city is challenged by a large number of single parent homes, under-educated and disenfranchised parents. The lack of parental involvement adds to the already unstable education situation (Hinkle, 2008) and students that come to school academically behind frequently provide challenges for even the most experienced teachers. In some urban classrooms, there are students who have more than one teacher during the year as a result of teacher attrition (McCandless, 2009). It is evident that urban schools and schools with high percentages of minorities are difficult to staff and teachers often leave when more attractive offers are presented (Guarino, Santibanez, Daley, & Brewer, 2004). The culture of today’s middle school teacher drastically differs from the student being taught (Haberman & Richards, 1990) and it is vitally important that teachers become acquainted with the individual

cultural perspectives that may be encountered (Moore, 2008). Teachers in urban schools need to be in tune with the local community (Jones & Sandidge, 1997) and the culture of poverty that exists. These teachers must be sensitive to the needs of the children they serve and create a classroom that responds to the needs of urban students (Jones & Sandidge, 1997). According to Hanushek et.al (2005) evidence suggests that students in urban schools perform better when matched with teachers of the same race. The study goes on to state that African-American teachers tend to be more effective with minority students and that the benefit is slightly statistically higher for girls than for boys.

Urban schools constantly put forth great effort to sustain a full cadre of teachers meeting the highly qualified criteria and are committed to high achievements for all students (Jones & Sandidge, 1997). The reasons for shortages that urban districts encounter are not a mystery, however; policymakers appear to be unable to identify a solution to resolve the issue. Adams and Dial (1993) also note that many of the nation's highest teacher attrition cases occur in urban school districts, where classes are often staffed with the most inexperienced teachers (Jacob, 2007). Urban middle school teachers are often very dissatisfied (Anfara & Stacki, 2002) and districts find it very difficult to find qualified teachers for classroom vacancies (Schoon & Sandaval, 2000). Haberman (1995) suggests that with the challenges that urban teaching offers, it frequently requires a mature and experienced individual. However, Boyd, et al. (2007) have found that teachers with stronger qualifications are more than likely to transfer or resign leaving the less qualified teachers in these urban high poverty schools. Since the 1990's the alternative certification trend has been especially troublesome for urban schools with a high poverty population (Schoon & Sandaval, 2000). These schools tend to have teachers

that are more poorly trained in the subject they teach and often have significantly less experience (NPTARS, 2005). Schoon and Sandoval have also stated that children who are already disadvantaged do not need poorly prepared or inexperienced teachers (2000).

Teacher shortages are overwhelmingly high in urban low income districts than in suburban affluent districts (NCTAF, 2002). Urban schools suffer from much greater complications than do their counterparts in suburban and rural areas (Moore, 2008). High-poverty urban schools are greatly affected by yearly huge outflows of teachers (MetLife Survey, 2005). Even if teachers in high-poverty schools have considerable experience and adequate credentials, generally they are inadequately prepared and very often unsupported to handle the enormous challenges they face (NPTAR, 2005). These teachers face unique challenges that often include cultural diversity, low socioeconomic status, a high immigrant population, a multitude of social problems, poverty, high drop-out rates and most crucial a high teacher turnover rate (Schoon & Sandaval, 2000). These challenges including the many other complex district and community issues can lead teachers to become cynical, skeptical and burned out (Moore, 2008) resulting in their departure from the school.

Teacher Retention in Urban High-poverty Middle Schools

Since the late 1950s, teacher retention has been a serious problem for the United States (Scott, 1999). America's schools have created an enormous achievement gap. Schools with high concentrations of students receiving free or reduced lunch had an average teacher turnover rate of near 11% in 2008-2009 (NCES, 2010). Teaching in an urban setting can be stressful and often leads to a high level of teacher burnout (McKinney, Berry, Dickerson, Campbell, and Whatley, 2007). As stated in McKinney,

Berry, et al. (2007) high poverty schools within urban communities often have higher turnover rates compared to affluent districts. Getting the good teachers and keeping them is a difficult challenge for many urban school districts (Shann, 1998). Nationally, many of the highest rates of attrition can be found in urban school districts (Adams & Dial, 1993). This continuous cycle of teacher movement is systematically most often related to the characteristics of the student body and most importantly the achievement level of the students (Hanushek et al., 2005). Teacher turnover can reduce student learning and create instability in schools making it more difficult to have coherent instruction (Boyd et al. 2007). Bowers (2000) finds that challenges teachers encounter in urban schools are reflected in a high degree of teacher turnover. Current empirical studies suggest that teacher stability rates for students in high poverty schools have a direct impact on the educational performance of those students (McKinney, Berry, et al. 2007). Urban districts suffer severe shortages because few teachers want to work in environments where work conditions such as increased student absenteeism, lack of parental involvement and poverty are present (Jacob, 2007). Ballou (1996) finds that many districts do not hire the candidates that are best for the job therefore the end result is attrition. Urban teachers that experience these types of challenges are less likely to remain at the same school for extended periods of time (Jacob, 2007).

Specific factors have been found to attribute to high teacher turnover, specifically in urban, hard-to-staff schools. Teachers cite lack of support and poor working conditions as primary factors of leaving (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2005). Some teachers prefer not to teach in urban schools because they believe there are fewer resources and more challenges in working with students (Southeast Center for Teaching Quality, 2002).

Urban teacher attrition rates appear to be more prevalent among teachers early in their career. These under-qualified and least experienced teachers are often assigned to the most difficult classes in urban schools that serve poor, minorities and English Language Learners (Strong, 2005) and thus the turnover for these inexperienced teachers is extremely high (Hanushek et al., 2005). Many teachers start their education career in urban districts and later decide to leave only after gaining a few years of experience (Miner, 2009). The revolving door of attrition within the urban school district roughly costs \$7 billion annually (Kopkowski, 2008). Low performing high poverty urban schools need to be thoroughly transformed (Belfanz & MacIver, 2000) and urban districts need new ways to hire and keep talented teachers (Keiffer-Barone & Ware, 2001).

It is a well known fact that not all schools have access to the most effective teachers. A good education is often the only means of shattering the poverty cycle and providing an education rooted in high standards and expectations for high-poverty urban students (Pellino, 2007). High-need schools serve large proportions of students that are economically disadvantaged and face severe challenges in retaining teachers (Berry, 2010). Master teachers are the key to improve teacher quality (Carter, 2000) and increase student achievement in urban middle schools. Nothing is more critical to the performance of schools than to have teachers that are capable and dedicated (Levin, 2008) to teaching urban students. A teacher's approach to working with at-risk students is the most powerful indicator of an effective urban teacher (Haberman, 2006). Many urban educators tackle the unique and often persistent difficulties of teaching in high poverty urban schools by concentrating on producing student success and their personal moral commitment (McKinney et al. 2007). Urban teachers should believe in their students'

ability to do well, learn and contribute to society (Stanford, 2001). Some teachers who remain in urban schools note that their students provide them with motivation as a reason why they remain (Thompson, 2007). Hanushek et al. (2005) notes that the teachers that remain in urban schools are as good or even better on average than those that leave. Dr. Martin Haberman (1995), described teaching in high-poverty schools as an experience filled with volatile, high charged emotions that can physically drain and exhaust even the most competent and veteran teacher. A focus group of teachers were asked to identify what would be necessary to encourage work in some of the most challenging schools. These teachers cited needs such as experienced principals, incentives to teach math and English, high quality professional development, Instructional Coaches and smaller class size (Grier & Holcombe, 2008). Olson (2003), states that teachers will most likely remain in urban high poverty schools when they are safe and orderly with a respectful and welcoming environment; provide ongoing support for teachers; offer timely provision of materials and led by strong instructional leaders who can delegate authority and develop leadership skills in others, even if they have the opportunity to go elsewhere.

Summary

McKinney et al. (2007), states that many teachers are more than capable of meeting the demands and challenges of urban teaching. Experienced administrative leadership, incentives and quality on the spot professional learning and support must be in place to support teachers whether novice or veteran when teaching in urban schools. Good teaching is crucial to student success and achievement; urban districts must be focused on locating and retaining quality educators (Levin & Quinn, 2003).

Specifically in secondary schools within low income settings, research reveals that a teacher's dedication to teaching and how they assume responsibility for their students' learning is related to how much students will learn (Lee & Loeb, 2000). Regardless of school wealth, student demographics or staffing, the most crucial resource for continuing improvement and increased student achievement is the skill and knowledge of the school's best-prepared and most committed teachers (Darling-Hammond, 2003). Teachers in urban schools need to take responsibility for their students (Halvorsen, Lee, & Andrade, 2009) which will reduce the number of teachers leaving urban high poverty middle schools. These high poverty schools can generate greater student achievement if there are a clear set of challenging standards (Picucci, Brownson, Kahlert, & Sobel, 2004) presented by teachers. Michele Foster (2004) believes that urban schools should focus on "the idea of improving the achievement of low-income students by enhancing the competence and performance of teachers who are already working in the neediest schools" (p. 401). Many of these urban teachers are capable of meeting the demands and challenges of urban teaching with overwhelming success because they are persistent and committed to each child's potential (McKinney et al. 2007).

Attracting and retaining good teachers is difficult, but in order to make lasting changes to this situation there needs to be a detailed school-level analysis with clear identification and description of the obstacles that hinder teacher retention accompanied by a total long-term commitment to make changes (Copeland, 2007).

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Overview

The purpose of this study was to determine the factors that teachers perceive are important when contemplating whether to remain in an urban middle school. In addition, the study examines the relationships between administrative support and collegial support, teaching environment, job conditions, student relations, and standardized criterion-referenced assessments, to gender, ethnicity, education level, and years of experience, to determine if a teacher's position within the career and life cycle continuum significantly impacts the teacher's decision to remain in a teaching position. The chapter is organized to provide a description as to how the answers to the research questions were gathered. The first section describes the population and how it was determined. The second section describes how data collection procedures were implemented. The third section describes the importance and reasoning for the research design. The fourth section explains the instrumentation used in the study including the purpose and creation of the instrument.

Research Design

Quantitative data was gathered for this study using a multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA). This MANOVA was used to analyze data to determine if there is a difference in teacher perception of factors that impacted their decision to remain by gender, ethnicity, educational level or years of experience.

The study was guided by the following research hypotheses:

- H1: There is no statistically significant difference in administrative and collegial support, teaching environment, job conditions, student relations and standardized criterion-referenced assessments and gender of the teacher.
- H2: There is no statistically significant difference in administrative and collegial support, teaching environment, job conditions, student relations and standardized criterion-referenced assessments and years of experience of the teacher.
- H3: There is no statistically significant difference in administrative and collegial support, teaching environment, job conditions, student relations and standardized criterion-referenced assessments and education of the teacher.
- H4: There is no statistically significant difference in administrative and collegial support, teaching environment, job conditions, student relations and standardized criterion-referenced assessments and ethnicity of the teacher.

These four hypotheses provide the framework for the collecting, analyzing, and interpreting data.

Participants

The subjects in this study were middle school teachers in an urban school district located in a suburban county of Metropolitan Atlanta, Georgia, with an estimated student population of approximately 100,000. The grades taught by the participants were sixth,

seventh and eighth with subjects ranging from core content classes (Language Arts, Mathematics, Social Studies and Science) to electives such as Physical Education, Art, Band, Music Orchestra, Business, Technology, Family Consumer Science and Health. The participants are teachers at the selected high-poverty middle schools. Their experience ranges from a second year teachers to veterans with 25 or more years of classroom experience. The expected total number of respondents for this study was approximately 500 from nine selected middle schools. Demographic characteristics of each teacher participant include ethnic origin, age, gender, current teaching assignment, degree level, years of experience, certification level and salary. When approval was granted by the participating school district and the respective principals at each selected middle school, the researcher introduced the study and provided a letter of informed consent to each qualifying participant.

Instrumentation

The quantitative research instrument used to gather data for this study was a Likert Survey designed to acquire information about factors significant to teacher retention as perceived by the teacher. The questionnaire used was an existing instrument initially used in a dissertation entitled *A Study of Urban Elementary School Teachers' Perceptions of Factors that Impact Teacher Retention* (Hinkel, 2008). Permission to use and/or modify the instrument was granted by the designer (Appendix A). The second portion of the survey asks for demographic information about the participant. The instrument was developed with data collected from a panel of twelve teachers and by characteristics gained from current research (Hinkel, 2008).

The questions pertaining to teaching assignment were adjusted to reflect middle school teachers. A pilot study was conducted to determine the reliability of the instrument.

All of the questions from the questionnaire with the exception of three (1, 16, and 22) were relationally grouped into categories to highlight five factors. The factors are as follows: (a) administrative and collegial support (3, 4, and 21), (b) teaching environment (7, 8, 14, 15, and 19), (c) job conditions (2, 6, and 12), (d) student relations (9, 10, 13, and 20) and (e) standardized criterion-referenced assessments (5, 11, 17, and 18). An open-ended question was also provided at the end of the survey. The purpose of the open-ended question was to allow participants an opportunity to specifically expound on the factors that they considered significantly impacted their decision to remain. Additionally the open-ended question provided the researcher with the opportunity to collect more in-depth information concerning the factors that influenced the experience of the teacher and their longevity at the middle school.

Procedures

The proposed instrument for this study was designed to assess teachers' perceived relative importance of characteristics associated with teacher retention (Hinkle, 2008). The instrument was developed with data that was collected from a twelve-person focus group of elementary teachers that was composed of two teachers from each grade Kindergarten through fifth grade and characteristics identified by the literature research conducted by Hinkle, the developer. The focus group was developed to "draw upon the specific attitudes, feelings, beliefs, experiences and reactions, to explore and generate hypotheses and develop the questions for the questionnaire" (Hinkle, 2008, p. 35). The group organized by the researcher Hinkle, was designed to facilitate a discussion with the

selected individuals to gain information about their views and experiences in education. Each member was requested to respond to a series of questions concerning their positions and continued employment. At the end of the discussion, the group members were asked to share any ideas from previous questions that were not addressed. “The process provided insight into shared understandings and perceptions of daily life in the school environment” (Hinkle, 2008, p. 36). The responses and key points gathered by Hinkle, and identified during the discussion were compared with pertinent information discovered during the literature review. Hinkle found many of these items to be very similar. Those items included “job satisfaction, perceived job security, support from principal, collegial support, teaching methods and instructional methodologies, discipline, salary, teaching environment, workplace conditions, community, student needs, parent communication, emotional professional and social support” (Hinkle, 2008, p. 36). Hinkle (2008) selected predictor variables that derived from earlier studies of concerns of middle and high school teachers conducted by Thomas and Kiley (1994). Hinkle, the previous researcher, did not provide specific information regarding the reliability of the instrument used. Therefore, prior to the actual study, this researcher conducted a pilot study to establish the reliability of the revised questionnaire which will be further discussed in Chapter IV.

The Likert survey format of the questionnaire consists of choices of major negative impact, negative impact, neutral impact, positive impact and major positive impact as it relates to factors that affect retention as perceived by the teacher. The questionnaire is designed to gather responses for each dependent variable as well as the independent variables of the respondent’s gender, ethnicity, education level and years of

experience. Measures of central tendency and analysis of variability statistics were also used for the factors perceived as important to the respondents.

After receiving approval from the research review committee within the school system (Appendix C) the researcher submitted and gained approval from the University of Southern Mississippi's Institutional Review Board (Appendix B), the questionnaire (Appendix D) was made available to participants through an interactive internet survey program via Kwiksurveys.com as well as with the use of paper copies. The researcher requested a meeting with the principal of each middle school to obtain approval to survey teachers following a faculty meeting. After approval was granted, the researcher will briefly presented the study to the faculty at each school and provided. Qualifying teachers were given an informational letter and asked to complete the survey. The letter described the specifics of the study including the purpose, a statement that promises and assures confidentiality as well as a statement of their voluntary commitment to participate in either the electronic or paper questionnaire. Included within the letter given were instructions for accessing the electronic survey via the internet. Participants that requested an alternative means of completing the survey were given a paper copy of the instrument and instructions on how to return their questionnaire to the researcher. The responses were anonymous and identified through numeric designation only.

Limitations/Delimitations

The following are perceived limitations of the proposed study:

1. The study will be limited to one suburban school district in Metropolitan Atlanta, Georgia. Only middle school teachers currently employed in the

school district will be surveyed. Identifying, locating and surveying teachers that have left the district will not be a viable option.

2. The study will be limited to the degree of accuracy of responses provided by the participants on the survey. It will be assumed that the responses given are honest and truthful.
3. Teachers who do not respond may likely be teachers who will not be retained or who choose not to return.

Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics were used to describe the basic features of the data in this study and provide simple summaries about the sample and measures used. The descriptive statistics used will simply describe what the data actually shows (Trochim, 2006). Frequency distributions of the responses from each independent variable (gender, ethnicity, years of teaching experience and education level) on the questionnaire was analyzed as well as. Measures of central tendency are utilized to accurately analyze the factors perceived as important based upon the responses provided by the participants. The significant differences found while using the MANOVA, were followed by post hoc tests used to further analyze the hypotheses and determine if a significant difference in fact does exist.

Summary

This causal comparative study was designed to determine if there is a relationship between factors that teachers encounter and their decision to remain employed in urban middle schools as it relates to gender, ethnicity, years of experience and education level. Middle school teachers from across the selected Metropolitan Atlanta school district were

asked to complete the Teacher Retention Questionnaire. The questionnaire presented factors that teachers may have considered significant when contemplating whether to remain in their current position, an open ended question was included with the questionnaire to allow respondents to expound on their specific responses as well as demographic data such as the teachers' gender, age, years of experience, grade level, salary, educational level, ethnicity and school's Title I status.

CHAPTER IV

ANALYSIS OF DATA

The purpose of this study was to seek the factors that teachers perceive as important when contemplating whether to remain in an urban middle school. Furthermore, the study identified if a significant relationship existed between the factors that teachers consider important and/or the teacher's gender, ethnicity, years of experience and level of education.

Description of the Participants

Participants in this study consisted of teachers in grades 6-8 who teach all subjects offered at the middle school level. The researcher sought the participation of nine middle schools in the selected Metropolitan Atlanta school district. Of the nine schools selected, only three middle schools participated in this study. The researcher sought to include schools in which the communities were close in proximity and where student populations were very similar.

A pilot test of the instrument was conducted prior to the study to determine the reliability of the questionnaire. The researcher used a sub-set of the participants. Teachers from local middle schools agreed to participate by responding to the survey. The pilot test yielded a Cronbach's alpha of .864, which measures the internal consistency of the instrument. One question was raised by a participant regarding the manner in which the open-ended question on the instrument was written. The question was revised for clarity using the suggestions provided.

Approximately 250 questionnaires were distributed. There were a total of 194 participants in this study, with 102 responses entered on the Kwiksurveys.com website.

Female participants comprised 77.8% with 18% being males and 4.1% of the participants neglecting to select an option. The ethnicities of the participants were as follows:

African-American, Black 82%; Caucasian, non-Hispanic 4.1%; Hispanic, Latino 3.1%; Asian 2.1%; Other 4.6% with 4.1% of respondents electing not to select an option.

Among the respondents were teachers of varying experience levels: 8.1% with 1-3 years; 28.6% with 4-9 years; 24.9% with 10-15 years; 22.2% with 16-20 years and 16.2% with 20 or more years of teaching experience. The participants' level of education also varied in that the majority of the participants, 43.8% have obtained a Master's degree; 21.6% have obtained only a Bachelor's degree; 22.7% have obtained a Specialist and 7.7% have obtained a Doctorate degree (data shown in Table 1).

Table 1

Description of the Participants

		<i>n</i>	%
Gender	Male	35	18.0
	Female	151	81.2
	No Response	8	4.1
Ethnicity	Caucasian, non-Hispanic	8	4.1
	Hispanic, Latino	6	3.1
Ethnicity	African-American	159	82
	Asian	4	2.1
	Other	9	4.6

Table 1 (continued).

		<i>n</i>	%
Ethnicity	No Response	8	4.1
Years of Experience	1-3	15	7.7
	4-9	53	27.3
	10-15	46	23.7
	16-20	41	21.1
	20+	30	15.5
	No Response	9	4.6
Education Level	Bachelor's	42	21.6
	Master's	85	43.8
	Specialist	44	22.7
	Doctorate	15	7.7
	No Response	7	3.6

All of the questions on the questionnaire were grouped into main factors according to how they were related except three questions (1, 16, and 22). The group factors were (a) administrative and collegial support (3, 4, and 21), (b) teaching environment (7, 8, 14, 15, and 19), (c) job conditions (2, 6, and 12), (d) student relations (9, 10, 13, and 20) and (e) standardized criterion-referenced assessments (5, 11, 17, and 18). Each of the main factors was examined against the independent variables of gender, ethnicity, years of experience and educational level.

Tests of Hypotheses

The teacher respondents each rated his/her perception of the factors that most impacted their decision to remain in their current position using a Likert-style rating system. The questionnaire was designed so that participants could identify their responses based upon the impact each factor had on the decision of the teacher. The varied responses presented were major negative, negative, neutral, positive or major positive. A multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was used to compare the means of the group of dependent variables for all hypotheses (H_1 , H_2 , H_3 and H_4). A set of multivariate tests, Pillai's Trace, Wilks' Lambda, Hotelling's Trace and Roy's Largest Root, were used. For the statistical results to be considered significant in the study, the result must have met the $p = .05$ significance level. When further investigation was necessary, the Tukey's Honestly Significant Difference test (HSD), a Post hoc comparison test was used to identify which of the compared means differed.

Gender and Factors

A MANOVA was performed to test H_1 : There is no statistically significant difference in administrative and collegial support, teaching environment, job conditions, student relations and standardized criterion-referenced assessments and gender of the teacher. The MANOVA performed indicated that there was a statistical difference in the combined variables of gender and the factors (support, environment, job conditions, student relations and assessments), $F(5, 180) = 6.36, p < .001$; Wilks' Lambda = .86. Analysis of each individual dependent variable, using Bonferroni adjusted alpha level of .01, showed that there was no significant difference found in support $F(1, 184) = .30, p = .59$; no significant difference found in environment $F(1, 184) = 1.04, p = .31$; a

significant difference found in job conditions $F(1, 184) = 21, p < .001$; no significant difference found in student relations $F(1, 184) = .008, p = .93$; no significant difference found in assessment $F(1, 184) = .35, p = .55$. Upon further investigation of the mean scores, the results revealed that females ($M = 2.62, SD = .863$) rated job conditions more important than males ($M = 1.90, SD = .719$) when considering to their decision to remain (Table 2). Thus, the results yielded data to suggest that the researcher should reject H_1 that there is no statistically significant difference in administrative and collegial support, teaching environment, job conditions, student relations and standardized criterion-referenced assessments and gender of the teacher.

Table 2

Means of Factors by Gender

	Gender	<i>n</i>	Mean	Standard Deviation
Support	Male	35	2.34	.93
	Female	151	2.42	.78
Environment	Male	35	2.17	.80
	Female	151	2.03	.72
Job Conditions	Male	35	1.90	.71
	Female	151	2.62	.86
Student Relations	Male	35	2.10	.86
	Female	151	2.09	.82

Table 2

	Gender	<i>n</i>	Mean	Standard Deviation
Assessments	Male	35	1.99	.90
	Female	151	1.91	.71

Experience and Factors

A MANOVA was performed to test H₂: There is no statistically significant difference in administrative and collegial support, teaching environment, job conditions, student relations and standardized criterion-referenced assessments and years of experience of the teacher. The MANOVA performed indicated that there was a statistical difference in the combined variables of experience and the factors (support, environment, job conditions, student relations and assessments), $F(20, 585) = 2.86, p < .001$; Wilks' Lambda = .73. Analysis of each individual dependent variable, using Bonferroni adjusted alpha level of .01, yielded that there was no significant difference found in support $F(4, 180) = 1.53, p = .20$; no significant difference found in environment $F(4, 180) = 1.12, p = .36$; no significant difference found in job conditions $F(4, 180) = 2.97, p = .021$; no significant difference found in student relations $F(4, 180) = 1.62, p = .17$; no significant difference found in assessment $F(4, 180) = 2.95, p = .022$. Participants were divided into five groups according to their years of experience (Group1: 1-3 years; Group 2: 4-9 years; Group 3: 10-15 years; Group 4: 16-20 years; Group 5: 20 years and above). The other groups did differ statistically from either of the other groups comparing factors. Thus the results led the research to accept the H₂ that there is no statistically significant

difference in administrative and collegial support, teaching environment, job conditions, student relations and standardized criterion-referenced assessments and years of experience.

Table 3

Means of Factors by Experience

Factors	Years of Experience	<i>n</i>	Mean	Standard Deviation
Support	1-3	15	2.53	.87
	4-9	53	2.40	.96
	10-15	46	2.53	.64
	16-20	41	2.14	.71
	20+	30	2.53	.96
Environment	1-3	15	2.05	.76
	4-9	53	2.23	.87
	10-15	46	2.00	.45
	16-20	41	1.93	.72
	20+	30	1.98	.72
Job Conditions	1-3	15	2.49	.54
	4-9	53	2.29	.95
	10-15	46	2.30	.69
	16-20	41	2.71	.82
	20+	30	2.81	1.13

Table 3 (continued).

Factors	Years of Experience	<i>n</i>	Mean	Standard Deviation
Student Relations	1-3	15	2.00	.55
	4-9	53	2.34	.97
	10-15	46	2.01	.50
	16-20	41	2.00	.91
	20+	30	1.94	1.07
Assessments	1-3	15	1.81	.67
	4-9	53	2.19	.88
	10-15	46	2.00	.47
	16-20	41	1.76	.80
	20+	30	1.69	.76

Education Level and Factors

A MANOVA was performed to test H_3 : There is no statistically significant difference in administrative and collegial support, teaching environment, job conditions, student relations and standardized criterion-referenced assessments and education of the teacher. The MANOVA performed indicated that there was a statistical difference in the combined variables of education level and the factors (support, environment, job conditions, student relations and assessments), $F(15, 492) = 3.66, p < .001$; Wilks' Lambda = .75. Analysis of each individual dependent variable, using Bonferroni adjusted alpha level of .01, yielded that there was no significant difference found in support $F(3,$

182) = 2.97, $p = .033$; no significant difference found in environment $F(3, 182) = 1.55$, $p = .203$; a significant difference was found in job conditions $F(3, 182) = 5.14$, $p = .002$; no significant difference found in student relations $F(3, 182) = 2.55$, $p = .058$; and no significant difference found in assessment $F(3, 182) = 1.00$, $p = .394$. Participants were divided into four groups according to their earned degree (Group1: Bachelor's; Group 2: Master's; Group 3: Specialist; Group 4: Doctorate). Post-hoc comparisons using the Tukey's HSD test indicated that relating to job conditions, the mean score for respondents with a Specialist degree ($M = 2.90$, $SD = .860$) was significantly different from those with a Master's degree ($M = 2.30$, $SD = .924$) and those with a Doctorate degree ($M = 2.18$, $SD = 1.10$). Thus, the results yielded data to suggest that the researcher should reject the H_3 that there is no statistically significant difference in administrative and collegial support, teaching environment, job conditions, student relations and standardized criterion-referenced assessments and level of education.

Table 4

Means of Factors by Education Level

Factors	Level of Education	<i>n</i>	Mean	Standard Deviation
Support	Bachelor's	92	2.54	.90
	Master's	85	2.42	.78
Support	Specialist	44	2.43	.78
	Doctorate	15	1.82	.92

Table 4 (continued).

Factors	Level of Education	<i>n</i>	Mean	Standard Deviation
Environment	Bachelor's	92	2.16	.80
	Master's	85	1.93	.71
	Specialist	44	2.20	.80
	Doctorate	15	2.11	.83
Job Conditions	Bachelor's	92	2.50	.60
	Master's	85	2.30	.92
	Specialist	44	2.90	.86
	Doctorate	15	2.18	1.10
Student Relations	Bachelor's	92	2.27	.83
	Master's	85	2.05	.84
	Specialist	44	2.16	.92
	Doctorate	15	1.60	.75
Assessments	Bachelor's	92	2.07	.77
	Master's	85	1.94	.80
	Specialist	44	1.82	.74
	Doctorate	15	1.78	.74

Ethnicity and Factors

A MANOVA was performed to test H_4 : There is no statistically significant difference in administrative and collegial support, teaching environment, job conditions, student relations and standardized criterion-referenced assessments and ethnicity of the teacher. The ethnicity was grouped, African-American and non-African –American (Caucasian, Hispanic, Latino, Asian and Other) for the purpose of comparison. The MANOVA performed indicated that there was a statistical difference in the combined variables of ethnicity and the factors (support, environment, job conditions, student relations and assessments), $F(5, 180) = 8.12, p < .001$; Wilks' Lambda = .82. Analysis of each individual dependent variable, using Bonferroni adjusted alpha level of .01, yielded that there was no significant difference found in support $F(1, 184) = .39, p = .53$; a significant difference was found in environment $F(1, 184) = 13.37, p < .001$; no significant difference was found in job conditions $F(1, 184) = 4.62, p = .03$; no significant difference found in student relations $F(1, 184) = .77, p = .38$; no significant difference found in assessments $F(1, 184) = .08, p = .78$. Upon further investigation of the combined mean scores, the results revealed that African-Americans ($M = 2.13, SD = .72$) considered environment more of an important factor than non-African-Americans ($M = 1.60, SD = .84$) when considering remaining in their current position (Table 5). Thus, the results produced data to suggest that the researcher should reject H_4 that there is no statistically significant difference in administrative and collegial support, teaching environment, job conditions, student relations and standardized criterion-referenced assessments and the ethnicity of the teacher.

Table 5

Means of Factors by Ethnicity

	Ethnicity	<i>n</i>	Mean	Standard Deviation
Support	Non-African American	27	2.31	.99
	African -American	159	2.42	.80
Environment	Non-African American	27	1.57	.84
	African -American	159	2.13	.72
Job Conditions	Non-African American	27	2.15	.84
	African -American	159	2.54	.88
Student Relations	Non-African American	27	1.95	.95
	African -American	159	2.11	.84
Assessments	Non-African American	27	1.96	.84
	African -American	159	1.92	.77

Summary

There were 194 middle school teachers surveyed from three (3) middle schools in one suburban school district in Metropolitan Atlanta, Georgia. The results indicated a decision to accept the null for Hypothesis 2. There was no significant difference found when the responses of the participating teachers of varying years of experience was compared to the factors presented (H_2). The additional data analysis led the researcher to reject the null for the other hypotheses. When analyzing the results provided by the respondents in relation to gender and job conditions, the combined means of females was

significantly different from males (H_1) therefore the researcher determined that a difference exists. When the education levels of responding teachers were compared, a significant difference was identified between teachers with Master's degrees and teachers with Specialist degrees in the area of job conditions (H_3). A significant difference was also identified when ethnicity was compared. African-American teachers considered environment more important when considering remaining in the middle school than non-African-American teachers did (H_4).

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY

Chapter V is a discussion of the study based on analyses presented in Chapter IV. Chapter V begins with a summary of the study and also includes recommendations for policy and practice, and recommendations for future research.

Summary of Study

The primary purpose of this study was to investigate the factors that urban middle school teachers consider significant in affecting their decision to remain in their current school setting. The factors through the literature as having an impact on all teachers in schools were tested with middle school teachers. Factors included were gender, experience of teacher, educational level of teacher, student relations, teaching environment, administrative and collegial support, job conditions, assessments and ethnicity. Furthermore, the researcher used an open-ended question to gain additional insight regarding the quantitative data gleaned from the respondents. The open ended question included with the questionnaire allowed participants to expound on their responses. The study was designed to determine which factors were more closely linked to attrition rates of middle school teachers in urban schools.

With the focus on teacher quality and accountability from No Child Left Behind and now Race to the Top, many teachers especially those in urban middle schools are faced with more challenges than ever seen before. This study sought to identify the factors that middle school teachers consider when they decide to remain as a teacher in their current schools. Shann (1998) states that teacher job satisfaction is a predictor of retention and is a determining factor in the level of commitment that teachers develop.

This study supports the fact that job conditions are critically impactful when middle school teachers consider continuous employment in their urban school. Based on the results of this study, job conditions which included job security, salary and tenure, have a significant impact on a teacher's decision to remain specifically for females, African-Americans and teachers with advanced degrees.

After obtaining permission from the local school district and The University of Southern Mississippi's IRB (see Appendix B) to conduct this research, a pilot study was conducted by the researcher. Permission was requested from nine urban middle schools and only three middle school principals granted permission for the study. The three principals provided access to their teachers either through faculty meetings or via email. The questionnaire was hosted online by www.kwiksurveys.com, a secure educational survey website. Paper copies were also provided for those respondents that requested to complete the questionnaire by hand. All participants receiving a paper copy of the questionnaire were provided with instructions to return the questionnaire if completed after the faculty meeting. The questionnaires were completed by middle school teachers with two or more years of experience. The data gathered by the questionnaire was coded and the results were entered in statistical software in order to test the hypotheses.

For the purpose of this study, four hypotheses were designed to determine which factors impact a teacher's decision to remain employed in an urban middle school. The hypotheses were as follows:

- H₁: There was no statistically significant difference in administrative and collegial support, teaching environment, job conditions, student relations and standardized criterion-referenced assessments and gender of the teacher.
- H₂: There was no statistically significant difference in administrative and collegial support, teaching environment, job conditions, student relations and standardized criterion-referenced assessments and years of experience of the teacher.
- H₃: There was no statistically significant difference in administrative and collegial support, teaching environment, job conditions, student relations and standardized criterion-referenced assessments and education of the teacher.
- H₄: There was no statistically significant difference in administrative and collegial support, teaching environment, job conditions, student relations and standardized criterion-referenced assessments and ethnicity of the teacher.

These four hypotheses provided the basis for collecting, analyzing, and interpreting data.

A multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was used to compare the established groups and identify whether the mean differences between the combinations of dependent variables would have likely occurred by chance (Pallant, 2007).

Multivariate tests of significance were used to indicate whether a statistically significant difference was found among the groups. When a significant result was found, the Tests of

Between-Subjects Effects was conducted to further investigate the dependent variables to analyze each separately. Pos Hoc tests were conducted to reduce the possibility of a Type I error while conducting the different comparisons.

Discussion

The study examined the perception of teachers regarding factors that impacted their decision to remain employed in their urban middle school to improve the retention rate of teachers. There were grouped factors presented to teachers that were to be determined as influential in their decision when contemplating ending their employment within the middle school. This study found that when examining the responses of teachers in reference to gender and job conditions (H_1), a significant difference was discovered when the means of males and females were compared. This finding led the researcher to draw the conclusion that females were more concerned with job conditions in regards to job security, salary, and tenure when contemplating separating from their current place of employment. Contrary to this finding was a study conducted by Hancock (2008), who found that there was a greater attrition rate for female music teachers than male music teachers. One reason for this discrepancy could be the state of the economy at the time the study was conducted. According to research, the decisions of female teachers to leave the workforce have been impacted by the fact that education is a family friendly occupation (Scafidi, Sjoquist, & Stinebrickner, 2006). McKee (2003) also reported that income was most often a major reason for teachers to exit the teaching profession. This statement contradicts the findings within this study as respondent noted job security and salary was a factor in their remaining in the current position.

Support for these findings is provided by a study conducted by Anderson (2001) that states that monetary issues were extremely important factors for teachers when considering continued employment.

Of particular interest in the analysis of the data generated within this study was the finding that in the tests conducted of experience and the factors (H_2) no significance was discovered at any of the experience levels. This finding led the researcher to draw the conclusion that regardless of years of experience, none of the presented factors were particularly impactful in the decision-making process of the respondents, since the compared means by experience were very closely related. Although, much has been noted regarding the rate at which novice and veteran teachers leave the profession (Grissmer & Kirby, 1987; Ingersoll, 2001), there was no indication in this study that the factors presented had a varying impact on the respondents' decision to remain.

In a study conducted by Watson (2001), schools that have a high number of teachers with advanced degrees are more likely to have higher student achievement. Watson (2001) also noted schools with a large number of minority students, often have a low percentage of teachers with Master's or higher degrees. When reviewing data collected of the relationship between educational levels and the factors, significance was discovered between teachers with Master's and Specialists degrees and job conditions (H_3). This finding seemed contrary to Watson's finding and could be the result of teachers considering the investment made to improve their craft before determining to leave their position.

In consideration of the factors and ethnicity (H₄), a significant relationship was discovered between African-American teachers and the environment. This finding is supported by a study conducted by Moore (2012) that suggested that the school environment played a crucial role in a teacher's satisfaction. The environment factor, which included workplace conditions, class size, concern for the neighborhood and ethnicity, appeared to be less significant to the non-African-American teachers surveyed. In the study conducted by Moore (2012), African-American teachers were more dissatisfied with their jobs before the school environment factors were considered. Since it is difficult to determine specifically in Moore's study as well as in this current study, which factors in the environment specifically impacted the decision of the teachers to remain, this finding would be worth additional study.

Recommendations for Policy and Practice

Retaining teachers in urban high poverty middle schools should be in the forefront of educational issues today. Former and current research indicates the positive impact that satisfied, effective teachers have on student achievement and school success. The findings of this study may provide guidance for school administrators as they look to staff their buildings with qualified teachers to improve student achievement. Teachers with advanced degrees may provide the stability needed to increase student achievement.

The information identified within the study will provide opportunities for superintendents and human resource directors to examine current hiring and assignment policies to ensure that factors that encourage teacher retention can be developed and executed to reduce teacher frustration and dissatisfaction within the middle school. For instance, consideration should be given to staffing high poverty middle schools with

teachers that desire to work in the school environment rather than simply assigned someone. Research also states that school administrators should focus on redesigning schools that are more conducive to teacher and student learning and reduce teacher workloads that ultimately can lead to job security (SECTQ, 2002).

Recommendations for Future Research

Educators must continue to address the issue and impact of teacher retention specifically in urban middle schools. Based upon the literature that was reviewed to support this study and the results that were yielded, the following recommendations for future research can be made:

1. The current state of the economy has caused many to reconsider their position within the teaching profession and seriously re-evaluate their continued employment within an urban middle school. Additional research could be conducted to determine what impact the change in the economy has had on retention specifically considering males and females.
2. McKee (2003) noted experience, education level and income as predictors of attrition and experience of teachers as a predictor of retention. This study found that the education level of teachers was significantly impacted by the factors of related to job conditions. Recently as many school districts and states are faced with reduced budgets, the incentives and benefits for teachers to possess advanced degrees is not a viable option. A future study could seek to determine if teachers with advanced degrees remain in urban middle schools.

3. McKee (2003) notes that African-American teachers are less likely to leave the teaching field when confronted with challenges in urban schools than white teachers that may be faced with equal challenges. In this study African-American teachers considered the school environment important when determining whether to remain in their current position. Further research could be designed to determine if other ethnic groups consider the environment a factor that influences their decision. Using a larger sample with a more diverse population may possibly yield a different set of results specific to other ethnic groups.

Summary

A great amount of emphasis has been placed on teacher attrition and recruitment in our public schools due to the emphasis to improve student achievement. Middle school tends to be a level where a large amount of students are lost and left behind. Some of these issues are due to community and environment issues but often times the operation of the school can be a determining factor of the achievement of students. This researcher was motivated by the number of years that many middle school teachers remain in those positions and why. More focus should be placed on retaining the most successful and effective teachers that staff high poverty urban middle schools since this is where the greatest need exist. The greatest cost of teacher attrition in urban school districts is felt by the students enrolled in high-poverty schools, who most often are taught by new, inexperienced and often inadequately trained teachers (NCTAF, 2003).

Effective teachers directly affect student achievement and if factors to improve teaching and retain staff at high poverty urban middle schools can be identified and duplicated, it is possible that a reduction can be seen, thereby possibly providing significant increases in student achievement.

Future research will aid in the efforts to create urban middle schools that are built for success and staffed by effective teachers. This research can also lead to the further development of recruiting and hiring practices by local agencies that will focus on placing the most qualified teachers in the schools to meet the needs of the most at-risk students.

APPENDIX A

LETTER OF PERMISSION TO USE SURVEY

Dr. J. David Hinkel
4508 Edgewood Drive
Reading, PA 19606
August 10, 2009

JacQueline E. Richardson
Doctoral Student
University of Southern Mississippi
Hattiesburg, Mississippi

Dear Ms. Richardson,

Thank you for your interested in the use of my survey tool to continue your educational research project. Please use this letter as your official permission to use the survey for the University of Southern Mississippi research endeavor.

If you have questions about my survey, please contact me by phone at 610-370-0248 or by e-mail at jdthink@verizon.net.

I look forward to reading your dissertation. Good luck with the research and data collection.

Sincerely,

Dr. J. David Hinkel

APPENDIX B

THE UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN MISSISSIPPI

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD REVIEW



THE UNIVERSITY OF
SOUTHERN MISSISSIPPI

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

118 College Drive #5147 | Hattiesburg, MS 39406-0001

Phone: 601.266.6820 | Fax: 601.266.4377 | www.usm.edu/irb

NOTICE OF COMMITTEE ACTION

The project has been reviewed by The University of Southern Mississippi Institutional Review Board in accordance with Federal Drug Administration regulations (21 CFR 26, 111), Department of Health and Human Services (45 CFR Part 46), and university guidelines to ensure adherence to the following criteria:

- The risks to subjects are minimized.
- The risks to subjects are reasonable in relation to the anticipated benefits.
- The selection of subjects is equitable.
- Informed consent is adequate and appropriately documented.
- Where appropriate, the research plan makes adequate provisions for monitoring the data collected to ensure the safety of the subjects.
- Where appropriate, there are adequate provisions to protect the privacy of subjects and to maintain the confidentiality of all data.
- Appropriate additional safeguards have been included to protect vulnerable subjects.
- Any unanticipated, serious, or continuing problems encountered regarding risks to subjects must be reported immediately, but not later than 10 days following the event. This should be reported to the IRB Office via the "Adverse Effect Report Form".
- If approved, the maximum period of approval is limited to twelve months. Projects that exceed this period must submit an application for renewal or continuation.

PROTOCOL NUMBER: **11072501**

PROJECT TITLE: **Retaining Urban Middle School Teachers:
An Investigation of Influencing Factors**

PROJECT TYPE: **Dissertation**

RESEARCHER/S: **Jacqueline Elaine Richardson**

COLLEGE/DIVISION: **College of Education & Psychology**

DEPARTMENT: **Educational Leadership & School Counseling**

FUNDING AGENCY: **N/A**

IRB COMMITTEE ACTION: **Exempt Approval**


PERIOD OF PROJECT APPROVAL: **07/28/2011 to 07/27/2012**


Lawrence A. Hosman
Lawrence A. Hosman, Ph.D.
Institutional Review Board Chair


7-29-2011
Date

APPENDIX C
SCHOOL SYSTEM
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL


Director


School System


Interim Superintendent



The Research and Evaluation Department


July 7, 2011

Ms. Jacqueline E. Richardson
6721 Gina Agha Circle
Lithonia, GA 30038

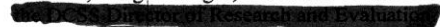
Reference: Research Proposal, *Retaining Urban Middle School Teachers: An Investigation of Influencing Factors* (File No. 2010-969)

Dear Ms. Richardson:

This letter is to advise you that your research proposal has been conditionally approved for implementation in . You should submit a copy of revision made to the proposal in order to meet these conditions. You may submit only the correction if you wish, clearly marking the change that you have made. Please make sure that you abide by the following condition before you begin your research: you must delete  on page 51 and substitute *for the school district where the research study is taking place or the large, urban school district in the Southeastern region of the United States where the study will occur.*


Once you have submitted this change to our department, you may invite principals to participate in your study. **(This letter serves as your final approval letter.)** Please remember that the principal/chief site administrator has the final right of approval or denial of the research proposal at that site. Therefore, before your research study begins, you must complete the following:

1. Contact the principal/chief site administrator(s) for all schools named in the proposal. Attach the abstract, all consent letters for students, parents, and/or staff, and this approval letter to the Local Site Research Authorization Form, and submit these documents to the principal/chief site administrator (s).
2. Return the Local Site Research Authorization Form(s) to the Department of Research and Evaluation within 15 school days of the date of this letter.

Be advised that this approval is valid for one year from the date on this approval letter. Should there be any addenda, design changes, or adverse events to the approved protocol, they must also be submitted in writing to . Changes should not be initiated until written approval is received. Further, should there be a need to extend the time requested for the project, a written request must be submitted for approval at least one month prior to the anniversary date of the most recent approval. This is the responsibility of the researcher. Should the time for which approval is given expire, it will be necessary to resubmit the proposal for another review by the Research Review Committee. Local school administrators and staff members may decline participation in the study even though district approval has been given.

Best wishes for a successful research project. Feel free to call me at 678.676.0023 if you have any questions.

Sincerely,


Director, Research and Evaluation

Cc: File



APPENDIX D

TEACHER RETENTION SURVEY

TEACHER RETENTION SURVEY

Answer each question below by selecting the option to the right that most correctly describes your response.	Major Negati ve	Negati ve	Neutral Impact	Positiv e	Major Positiv e
1. What impact does job satisfaction had on you remaining in your current position?					
2. What impact has job security played in you remaining in your current position?					
3. What impact has support from your principal had on you remaining in your current position?					
4. What impact has support from your colleagues played in you remaining in your current position?					
5. What impact has district recommended instructional methodologies had on you remaining in your current position?					
6. What impact has salary had on you remaining in your current position?					
7. What impact has the teaching environment had on you remaining in your current position?					
8. What impact has the workplace conditions had on you remaining in your current position?					
9. What impact has student needs had on you remaining in your current position?					
10. What impact has parental communication had on you remaining in your current position?					
11. What impact has professional development had on you remaining in your current position?					
12. What impact has tenure had on you remaining in your current position?					
13. What impact has sense of efficacy with students had on you remaining in your current position?					
14. What impact has class size had on you remaining in your current position?					
15. What impact has school neighborhood had on you remaining in your current position?					
16. What impact has personal feelings of connections to the school had on you remaining in your current position?					
17. What impact has No Child Left Behind and its requirements had on you remaining in your current position?					
18. What impact has student performance on the Georgia Criterion-Referenced Competency Test (CRCT) had on you remaining in your current position?					
19. What impact has the ethnicity of the school community had on you remaining in your current position?					
20. What impact has student discipline had on you remaining in your current position?					
21. What impact has the availability of teaching materials had on you remaining in your current position?					
22. What impact has loan waivers from working in a Title I school had on you remaining in your current position?					

1. What major reason had an impact on you remaining in your current position?
2. What is your gender? ☐ Male ☐ Female
3. What is your age? ☐ less than 30 ☐ 30 – 39 ☐ 40 – 49 ☐ 50+
4. What is your race? ☐ Caucasian, non- Hispanic ☐ Hispanic, Latino ☐ African-American,
Black ☐ Asian ☐ Other
5. How many years of teaching experience do you have? ☐ 1-3 ☐ 4-9 ☐ 10-15 ☐ 16-20 ☐ 20+
6. What grade level do you teach? ☐ 6th ☐ 7th ☐ 8th
7. What is your current yearly salary? ☐ \$35,000-44,999 ☐ \$45,000-54,999 ☐ \$55,000-64,999
☐ \$65,000
8. What is your current level of education? ☐ Bachelor's ☐ Master's ☐ Specialist
☐ Doctorate
9. Do you currently hold National Board Teacher Certification? ☐ Yes ☐ No
10. Does your school receive Title I funds? ☐ Yes ☐ No

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